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COMMUNION WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD

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COMMUNION WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD

A BOOK FOR CATHOLICS AND NON-CATHOLICS

BY

EDWARD F. GARESCHÉ, S.J., M.A., LL.B.

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TO

CHRIST, THE LOVER OF MANKIND

AND TO

HIS VIRGIN MOTHER.

PREFACE

It is the purpose of the following chapters to bring out in a popular way some of the great consolations which the Church offers her children through her doctrines concerning our communion with the world of spirits. The wish to commune with the dead and with the angels is, as we point out in the opening chapter, a natural one, spontaneous in the human heart. The Church ministers to this natural craving in a sane and normal way, giving her children the assurance of such communion—an assurance which she herself has received from her Divine Founder and Teacher.

At a time when so many delusive theories are being propagated concerning the world of the spirits, and when spiritism is so strongly urged as a means of communicating with the dead, it is especially timely to emphasize the right teaching on this important subject.

In what follows we have chosen to keep, for the most part, to the positive side of the Church's teaching, leaving it to the reader to make comparisons between her doctrines and those current outside her fold. To have entered adequately

into the controversial aspect of the subject would have unduly lengthened this book.

Much of the doctrine which we have developed herein is held by some outside the Church as well as by all of those within her communion. But the assurance of the truth of these doctrines rests for Catholics on the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church. It is she and she alone who unites both worlds in holy communion.

The Church Militant on earth is an arc in that mighty circle, which joins in its great circumference the Church Suffering in purgatory and the Church Triumphant in heaven.

May our brothers and sisters in those other worlds, the one of suffering and the other of glory, pray mightily for us and bring us at last to the perfect and happy communion of the Church of God in heaven!

Feast of Pentecost, June the eighth, 1924.

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COMMUNION WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD

CHAPTER I

THE DESIRE OF COMMUNION WITH THE SPIRIT-WORLD

The desire to commune with the world of spirits is, under some circumstances, a very human wish. The craving to continue, even beyond the mysterious barriers of the grave, the friendship and affection which life has engendered, shows itself at all historic periods, and takes extraordinary forms. The belief in immortality, universal among nations, brings with it a hope and expectation of somehow getting once more in touch with those who are gone beyond the tomb.

If they still live, if they are the same souls with whom we have dealt so familiarly during their stay on earth, why should they not still love us, still be interested in us? The fact that they are now in heaven, ecstatically happy, or, for the time being, in purgatory, immune from all possibility of sin, far from lessening their affection for their friends, should perfect and sublimate it.

If they loved us and wished us well in the state of imperfection, when selfish cares afflicted them and the trials of life distracted them from our interests, how much more must they love now, when their wills are one with the will of God.

In Days of Bereavement

Especially during the keen smart of bereavement which follows immediately upon the loss of someone very dear to us, this natural desire of communion makes itself felt with particular intensity. The aching void in our life drives us to desire some means of intercourse with our dead. What shall we do to make up for that daily intimacy, that free exchange of thoughts, opinions—even griefs and perplexities—which were halved because we shared them with another? Since the one whom we have lost still exists, though in a different state from our own, why should not our earnest prayers find him out? Why should not our supplications have power to aid him?

The Yearning for the Dead

Historical monuments bear witness to this craving of our human nature. Who has not stood in museums and marveled at the elaborate works in which the Egyptians showed their solicitude to communicate with and help the souls of the dead? In the mortuary inscriptions which

are forever being turned up from classic soil there occur pathetic addresses, elegies in prose, wherein a bereaved husband speaks to the soul of his wife, or a father addresses his son or daughter, lately deceased. The more vivid and intense the belief in immortality, the greater these efforts became. The Egyptians, with their conviction that the departed had still the same needs, the same desires as ourselves, multiplied means of helping the souls who had gone forth on the pathway of the dead. The crowded mausoleums, supplied with food, clothing, books, statues of slaves and attendants which were supposed to have the magic power to serve the outwandering spirit, fill us with wonder at thought of the toil expended on these mortuary furnishings. But, fantastic as they are, they bear striking witness to the human instinct which craves to communicate with and to help the departed soul.

Trading on Sorrow

It is indeed iniquitous to trade upon this pathetic impulse, and to trick men and women into believing that they are in touch with the departed. Yet this species of swindling has gone hand in hand with the piteous craving for intercourse with the dead. From the incantations of savage witch-doctors to the subtle frauds which have been exposed in modern times is a far cry—but they both appeal to this impulse of our nature. Of course, not all who pretend to

communicate with the dead are swindlers, even though their pretensions are unjustified. In point of fact, they may first deceive themselves before they begin deceiving others. But that there have been many who used simulated powers of this kind for profit, no one will question.

The Charm of Christ's Teaching

When we put side by side the Catholic teachings upon this subject and the ideas which are current outside the Church the comparison is very instructive. The Catholic doctrine is a clear illustration of how singularly Christ's teaching ministers to the desires of the human heart.

Even Catholics who are fairly well instructed in their faith, do not appreciate to the full, it is to be feared, the significance of the Church's teaching. They believe, but they do not realize how great a consolation her doctrine offers to our human nature. This doctrine can wonderfully comfort us, smarting with the pain of bereavement and desirous to reach and help those who have gone before us into the hereafter, or wishful to have some aid from the friends we loved on earth and who have now passed into the presence of God and are for that reason so much more able to assist us. As for those outside the fold, it is quite certain that they have no notion of the depth and beauty of these Christian dogmas, confirmed by the authority of God.

Militant, Suffering, and Triumphant

The Catholic teaching, then, is as follows. There are, in creation, three great groups of souls, and all of these three groups may be truly called members of the Church of Christ. Those who, still in this mortal flesh, wage war for justice against the threefold onslaught of the world, the flesh and the devil, are called members of the Church Militant—the fighting Church. And these again fall into two classes. Where they have come into the communion of the visible Church, know and acknowledge her authority and form part of her flock, they are said to belong to the body of the Church. Besides these, however, there are other sincere lovers of God and of His Christ who are in invincible ignorance of the claims of the Church but who follow their conscience, serve and love God according to their lights, and hence are said to belong to the soul of the Church.

The Need of Expiation

Second, another great group of souls have passed from this life in the friendship of God but with some stains of sin still upon them, which merit a space of purifying punishment. Nothing in any way defiled can enter heaven, and the justice of God requires that even His friends, if they leave life with arrears of punishment still unpaid, must abide in purgatory—the place of cleansing—until they are quite clean, that is, have

"paid the last farthing" and are ready for heaven. These souls make up the Church Suffering, and they give glory to God through their patient expiation. We have no means of knowing how many they are, nor how long each one is compelled "to fast in fires, until his sins, done in his days of nature are burnt and purged away."

The Harvest of Glory

Finally, a third and the vastest group of souls are triumphant in heaven, gathered forever about the throne of the Lamb and partaking in the bliss of glory. This multitude, "of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" make up the Church Triumphant. They are the fruits of the Blood of Christ, His perfect harvest from the fields of time. To their blissful company shall many others also be gathered in the fullness of time. After the Judgment Day the Church Militant and the Church Suffering shall be no more, for they are but passing phases of the Christian's life, and brief beyond telling as compared with eternity. But the Church Triumphant, the perfect Bride of Christ, shall last forever—as long as God is God.

This is that goal for which human nature is forever longing, the dream of perfect happiness which shall come true at last. The members of the Church Triumphant are the Friends of God for all ages of ages.

Their Mutual Desire

It is natural that all these three classes of the friends and servants of God should desire some mutual communication. We on earth yearn to speak to and commune with the blessed in heaven, for their glory and our good. We wish to pray to them, to partake in the benefits of their powerful intercession, to confide to them our own trials and difficulties, and to share, as far as we may, in their ecstatic bliss. Glorious as they are in that inaccessible light, enjoying the vision of God's loveliness, they are still our fellow creatures. Once they were our companions in this place of trial and exile; soon we also, we hope, shall have gained the secure haven where they abide, and be added to their celestial company. All these, and many more reasons there are why we should wish to commune with them.

Their Perfect Love

We may be quite sure, too, that these blessed souls in heaven desire even more than we to give us the benefit of such communion. Their charity towards us is perfect. They love us with a fervor and purity of benevolence of which we cannot conceive. All their motives for loving us with pure charity are intensified by the light of glory, and all the hindrances to charity which exist here on earth are removed from them. Being perfect, their love for us is likewise perfect, and whereas now we are impelled to pray to them with great

confidence, our assurance would be multiplied if we could understand how much they—the saints in heaven—love us and how powerful they are with God. Hence, from their side there is a great desire to give to us the blessings of communion with them and of their intercession.

The Poor Souls

As to the souls in purgatory, they also desire this communication—and more than we do. They wish the benefit of our intercession to alleviate their miseries, to atone for their past sins. But they also yearn, since they are confirmed in charity and goodness, to do their best for us. They thus desire an exchange of kindly offices between themselves and the Church Militant.

Now, it is the belief of Catholics that God in His power and goodness has chosen to gratify this holy desire for mutual communion which exists in all three divisions of the Church. This intercourse which He brings about between the Church Militant, the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant, is called the Communion of Saints. Through God's power and mercy we of the Church Militant, can communicate most freely at every moment with the blessed in heaven, and it is the truth of God that they hear us and can and will answer our petitions.

Our Privilege of Intercession

Moreover, we can communicate also with the poor souls in purgatory, and pray for them.

Precious privilege and power! We can help them mightily in their distress, can gain for them a remission of a part or the whole of their sufferings, and can communicate to them the indulgences which we so easily gain from the treasury of the Church, and which have been made applicable to the poor souls in purgatory. They in their turn, we may piously hope, can and do pray for us, and when they go to heaven they obtain from God the help and graces of which we stand in need. Thus from either side there is a communion of thoughts and prayers between the living and the dead whether in heaven or in purgatory.

A Blessed Assurance

Thus simply stated, the doctrine of the Communion of Saints is full of meaning and consolation. It gives us the assurance that our craving to communicate with the dear departed who have died in God's friendship may certainly be satisfied. Indeed it is easier for us to get in touch with them than with our friends on earth who are often absent or distracted. The inward thoughts of our souls, directed to our friends in the other world, become manifest to them through the power of God without the sound of words.

The Confidence of Faith

It is true that on our side this communion is for the most part a matter of faith and not of

sensible experience. But faith is more certain than experience, for in concrete instances we know that our own senses deceive us, but not so the infallible word of God. We are somewhat in the position of the wireless broadcaster, who speaks to a million persons from the little room where his instruments are kept. He knows that his apparatus is in good order, that the waves throb through the ether and are translated into sound in the ears of listeners, thousands of miles away. But all this he knows by human faith. Perhaps he does not understand the medium of transmission. Certainly he cannot fathom the process nor explain it satisfactorily, for no one can. But he has been assured on good authority that his voice carries for thousands of miles, and he speaks with as much assurance as though he heard the voices of his myriad auditors answering back to him from the wildernesses of space. He has only human evidence for his belief, we, for our confidence in the power of the saints to hear and help us, have the unerring word of God.

The Choirs of Angels

Besides, there is also the teaching of the Church concerning the holy angels, to assure us of another vast multitude of friends in the spirit-world to whom we may also pray and who can mightily aid us. The Catholic faith teaches us that besides the souls of the dead there are in creation a host of pure spirits called angels, made

like ourselves in the likeness and image of God but not united to a material body as is our spirit. These angels are the first-born children of God, having been created before the human race came into being. The Fathers of the Church enumerate nine choirs of angels, the Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Cherubim and Seraphim. Of these, some, alas, proved recreant in the test which God made of their fidelity and fell into the depths of hell which was created for their dwelling place. The rest, obeying God, deserved the vision of His glory and they are the princes of the heavenly court to whose companionship we are called for all eternity if we are but faithful to God during this brief space of mortal life.

Foes of Man

With the evil spirits it would be grievously wrong to seek any communion. They are the enemies of God and the most savage foes of humankind, whom they hate as being made in the image of the Most High God, and destined to take their empty thrones in heaven. But with the good spirits it is quite natural that we should seek and desire to hold communion. They are our celestial friends, our future companions throughout all eternity. They have at once immense power—being so strong of their own nature and so intimately united to God—and the best of good will to assist us.

Our Angel Guardians

Moreover, it is the common opinion of Theologians that each one of us has a Guardian Angel, a citizen of heaven, whose duty it is to watch over us during this life and be our protector, comforter, and guide. No wonder, then, that we should wish earnestly to form an intimate friendship with these holy spirits as well as with the souls of the faithful departed, to tell them of our dangers, griefs and fears, and to share in their protection, encouragement and inspiration. This, according to the Church's teaching, we may do by our prayers.

The Catholic Church satisfies this twofold desire of the human heart in a lawful and exalted way. Prayer can put us into effective and hallowed communion with the holy angels. To the Catholic, nothing is more real or certain than the witness of his faith. He takes as revealed by God whatever the Church teaches. Now, it is the doctrine of the Church that the saints and angels in heaven can hear us and help us, therefore when the Catholic prays to them he experiences a certitude of being heard and helped which is even greater than if he asked some earthly friend for aid.

Prayer for the Dead

So, too, the Church teaches that the souls in purgatory can be comforted by our intercession, and that they can help us in turn when they go to

heaven. Hence, the assurance of Catholics is complete that they can commune with their dead friends, can pray to them, whether in heaven or for the while, in purgatory, and that those in heaven can help their clients on earth. It is certain too, that the poor souls in purgatory, though their favor is great with God, still stand in need themselves of our intercession to free them from their place of expiation.

The confidence which Catholics feel in the truth of these things is based on the word of God and is therefore most secure and unwavering. At any moment, under any circumstances, alike in the press of danger or the calm of repose and safety, we can at once communicate with these friends in heaven and be sure that they will hear us and will heed. This is but one of the extraordinary consolations which come to those who truly believe in the Catholic Church. Nor is this only a subjective conviction without basis in reality. So strong a faith is built upon convincing testimony and anyone who looks into the credentials of the Catholic Church may readily assure himself of their conclusive authenticity and authority.

The Power of the Departed

But what of the reply which these blessed inhabitants of the other world give to their followers? Our human nature craves not only to address the spirit-world but also to receive some

answer therefrom. In what way do the departed reply to their clients? Or how can the blessed angels, or the saints, give evidence of their pleasure at their prayers?

The answer to these inquiries will be found in some measure in the following pages when we shall give examples of the power of the saints and angels to intervene in human affairs, and shall speak of that wonderful life after death which is so clearly witnessed by the marvelous interpositions of the blessed in human affairs.

It is not the will of God that we should be able to speak with the saints in heaven as we do to our human friends, to hear their voices or feel the clasp of their hand. Such communications would be open to illusion, and, besides, the disembodied souls and the angels have no voices nor hands, their manner of existence is different from ours and they are freed from the conditions of matter. Hence even in the case when authentic communications do occur from the dead to the living, as happens in certain apparitions of angels and saints, the blessed spirits have to assume some material form so as to impress our dull senses. This indeed sometimes happens, by way of exception, but it could hardly be expected as a usual incident in our lives.

Our Celestial Helpers

But the responses given by our friends in heaven to our prayers are nevertheless real and

tangible. They obtain for us spiritual and temporal favors, sometimes in the regular course of God's providence and sometimes by way of miracles and wonders. The history of the Church is full of such occurrences, to some of which we shall refer in later chapters. Every age brings its quota of them, and at any time in the life of the church we may be confident that such supernatural or preternatural interpositions are occurring somewhere on earth. Though the Church requires the most careful proof of every miracle admitted to justify the canonization of a saint, yet every saint who is canonized must have to his credit several such fully authenticated miracles, worked through his intercession.

CHAPTER II

SOME INSTANCES OF COMMUNION WITH THE SAINTS—THE LITTLE FLOWER

Remark, that while the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints satisfies our rational desire to have some contact with the souls of God's friends who have gone before us, by assuring us that our prayers to them are heard and that they can obtain good things for us and befriend us more than was possible to them while still on earth, still it does not cater to morbid curiosity nor to unlawful prying into the secrets of the grave. For the far greater majority of Catholics, life contains no preternatural experience of the kind boasted of by spiritistic mediums. They never hear the voices of departed friends, nor receive the visits of angels or disembodied spirits. Indeed, if such experiences were to come to them, they would be not a little disquieted, as even the saints have been on similar occasions. Anything like necromancy or the attempt to evoke the souls of the dead or hold sensible communion with them is forbidden by the Church, as we have before remarked, and is shunned by good Catholics as a sin.

Amazing Manifestations

Nevertheless, as an exceptional phenomenon in the life of the Church, there do occur manifestations of the most striking kind, as well attested as any ordinary facts of history, and to which men and women worthy of all credence soberly bear witness. These events are the true wonders of life after death, and their occurrence serves to strengthen our realization of the interest of our heavenly friends in our behalf, and of their power and wish to aid us. They are timed and arranged by Providence so as to furnish a constant succession of marvelous events, circling the globe and running through all periods of the Church's history—apparitions of holy men and women who have departed this life in the fame of goodness, signal favors received most evidently through their intercession and agency, miracles worked by their intervention, consolation given to the sorrowful and assurance to the doubtful through their benign and gentle ministration.

In regard to these manifestations the prudent Catholic is free to use care and reserve in giving belief until sufficient evidence is at hand of their genuineness. He knows that such things are possible by the mercy of God, and he expects them sometimes to happen. But whether here and now this or that account of a preternatural occurrence is true, is for him a matter of evidence, and he requires, of course, even stronger evidence for

the truth of such happenings that for things which come to pass in the ordinary course of nature.

The Caution of the Church

The Church herself proceeds with even more caution than the intelligent among her children in giving approval to a wonder of this kind. She sometimes even rejects, when there is question of a miracle, evidence that the courts of the land would accept to establish any fact.

To illustrate this, it is told of the learned Pope, Benedict XIV, that previous to his election to the Papacy he was employed in matters connected with the beatification and canonization of the saints concerning which he wrote so learned a treatise. It chanced that some non-Catholic visitors came to call upon him and the talk fell upon the subject of miracles. The evidence of some reputed miracles, to be approved or rejected for the cause of a holy person, was at that moment under examination, and the future pope showed his visitors a whole series of proofs and testimonies in verification of one marvelous occurrence.

"Well," cried out the visitors, "if all the wonders claimed by Catholics were as well proven as this one, there would be nothing to say against their authenticity."

"Yet the officials who examined this testimony on behalf of the Church," replied their host, smil-

ing, "rejected this miracle as not sufficiently proved. The evidence which seems so overwhelming for you was not sufficient for them. The Church requires greater certainty!"

The Customary Converse

Still, in regard to communion with the departed, the fervent Catholic has an attitude and leads a life scarcely comprehensible to those outside the Church. Knowing that the souls in heaven hear his prayers, and convinced of their power to aid him, he keeps up a constant intercourse with his departed friends, so habitual and spontaneous that he himself is scarcely aware of its extent. In times of grief or of joy his soul casts sympathetic and appealing glances upwards, sure of finding in the heavenly spirits who love him a constant response, and an instant reply. Just as the members of a family, living in habitual intimacy, speak to each other and exchange joys and sorrows while they scarcely are conscious of their own speech one to the other, so do those who are convinced of and realize the Church's teaching concerning the Communion of Saints discourse with their friends of the other world in habitual prayer and with almost unconscious frequency.

Friendship with the Little Flower

The author of these pages had occasion recently to visit the office of a Catholic business man,

an alert young fellow, pushing and competitive, with none of the earmarks of a person of special devotion. On his desk, quite simply displayed in its frame, in the middle of memoranda, documents and lead pencils, was a picture of Sister Teresa, Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower of Jesus, whose amazing career of life-after-death we shall comment on presently.

"I see," said the visitor, "that you have a picture of the Little Flower!"

"She is a chum of mine!" he answered enthusiastically, and then, as though he were speaking of a living friend, he went on to tell of some remarkable assistance he had received in putting through a very difficult and indeed desperate business enterprise in the face of fierce competition, by the aïd of the Little Flower.

He spoke of the whole occurrence in the most matter-of-fact way. He had prayed to her with great confidence as one would ask a favor of a very kind and powerful friend, and she had done what he had asked with promptness and efficacy. That was all there was to it. He would ask her again when need came with the same serene assurance, and he was entirely confident that if it were for his soul's good and God's glory, he would receive the same sort of response and help again. The Little Flower, dead these twenty-five years, is as real and living a friend for him as any he has on this earth, more precious, because she can hear him at any instant; more dear, for there

is no imperfection to mar her consummate friendliness.

The Bridge Between

Though most of them might not thus put it into words, this is the habitual attitude of many good Catholics toward the saints—and mark, that all those who have departed life in the friendship of God are numbered among the saints. Faith bridges over the gap between the living and the dead, and it is a faith not grounded on the ambiguous testimony of vague communications received through mediums, but a faith which rests on the word of God Himself. Neither is such daily experience of the intercession of the saints confined to the select few who study much and meditate profoundly on such subjects. The plain man, well grounded in his faith, shares this high confidence and friendly converse with the friends of God.

It would be easy to multiply instances of the intervention of the holy souls who have departed this life, in the affairs of men who are still on earth. In fact, few circumstances in the history of the Church are more remarkable than the careers of the saints after death. These facts, denied or overlooked by many outside the Church because they proceed on the supposition that miracles are impossible, form, for the Catholic, matter of ordinary evidence. If proof exists sufficient to attest the occurrence of these marvels, he is willing to believe them, since he knows

that God's arm is not shortened nor His mercy exhausted.

Their Sufficient Witness

Out of many instances of this kind, many marvelous and well-attested examples of communication with the saints, there are some of recent occurrence, proved by many witnesses, which are especially worthy of notice. The human testimony on which these wonders rest is of yesterday. Anyone who wishes to do so may go and converse himself with men and women who have had these experiences. We allude to the marvels reported of the life-after-death of the charming and beautiful character known as The Little Flower of the Infant Jesus, Sœur Thérèse, nun of the Carmel of Lisieux, who was lately raised by the Church to the honors of the altar.

Let us repeat that these wonders of communication between the living and the dead of which we now mean to speak are not imposed upon the belief of Catholics. They are related as upon good evidence like any other occurrence of record, and anyone who choses may investigate for himself the veracity of those who report them. But the men and women who witness these things, and those who repeat them are conscientious and God-fearing, and they would not say what they did not believe to be true, because they know that it is a sin to deceive, especially in so sacred a matter. With so much of introduction, let us sketch the career of the Little Flower, both be-

fore and after death—a marvelous instance of communion with the world of spirits.

In the Autobiography, written by Sœur Thérèse at various times by order of her superiors, and published after her death, we find charmingly and simply sketched the gentle chronicle of her days.

The Story of Sœur Thérèse

She was born at Alençon in France, and was soon taken by her parents with the rest of their family to Lisieux where she spent the rest of her brief life on earth. Theirs was an ideal Catholic home. The parents' piety was reflected in the lives of the children. The present writer visited not long since the house where her childhood was spent. It is a comfortable home of the middle class of French society, prettily set in a rather large garden, its rooms and furnishings bearing witness to the well-to-do ease with which the Little Flower's early days were surrounded. But though they gave their children toys and childish pleasures, the Martins—that was the family name—took care to instill the principles of self-sacrifice and fervent piety.

The grace of God flowered wonderfully in the heart of this little girl and, as several of her sisters had done before her, she developed the vocation to become a Carmelite nun, to embrace a life of prayer and penance for the love of that Christ to Whom her innocent soul turned with extraordinary love. She entered the Carmel in

the bloom of her girlhood, and hidden in the cloister she began the series of inner experiences of love and pain which led her to great union with God—to consummate sanctity. In her Autobiography one can trace, through her candid narrative, the sufferings, trials, graces and lessons wherewith her divine Lover prepared her virgin heart for intimate and pure union with His own. When she was twenty-five years of age, and had spent little more than a decade in the cloister, He plucked His Little Flower and took her to bloom in the gardens of the blessed.

A Hidden Flower

According to all human probabilities, here was the end of the career of Sœur Thérèse on earth. She had lived in great obscurity all her days. When in Lisieux, the writer particularly inquired of the old residents there whether they had specially remarked her or remembered her very vividly. Always the impression was the same. She was a good little girl, she was dutiful and pious, but not remarkable. Were it not for her life-after-death of which we are presently to speak, her memory would have passed into oblivion on earth as soon as those who had known her intimately were gone.

Even in the convent, there were some who could not fancy that her memory was to endure. It is the custom when a Carmelite nun dies that the story of her life or some account of her is

written and sent about to the other convents of the Sisterhood. Not long before the death of the Little Flower one of the lay-sisters of her convent observed that "when the Reverend Mother had to write the account of her life (for it was evident to all that she had soon to die), she would be puzzled what to say"—there was so little, in the estimation of this sister, to remark about her.

Her Flaming Zeal

It is true that she herself had premonitions of her own future activities in helping after death those who would appeal to her intercession. Indeed the flaming zeal which possessed her soul made her ardently desire to pass her existence beyond the tomb in doing good upon earth. "I shall spend my heaven," she once declared with simple confidence to her sisters, "in doing good upon earth." And on another occasion, looking forward to the glorious existence which she confidently expected after death, she cried out, "I shall let fall upon earth a shower of roses."

These utterances, however, and even the appealing charm of her Autobiography would not have availed to spread her renown far and wide after she had passed away, were it not for the astonishing evidences of her activity and power which began to be told from all sides by those who had experienced her assistance. Before she had long been dead her Autobiography was published, and, as was natural, men and women who

were stirred to faith in her intercession began to appeal to her to pray for them and to help them from heaven. This is not unusual with those who believe in the Communion of Saints and are aware that God desires us to employ the good offices of His servants in appealing to His mercy, but what is altogether unusual and extraordinary is the response which has come to these confident petitions.

The Shower of Roses

In the lives of all the canonized servants of God we read thoroughly attested proofs of the power of their intercession after death. So soon as a person of very great and well-known holiness has departed this life, the faithful who are in need or distress of any kind feel impelled to appeal for help from one who, they are confident, has great power with God. Miracles are wrought, and spiritual favors descend from heaven as a consequence of these appeals, and one of the chief signs by which the Church recognizes the heroic sanctity of any one proposed for canonization is the thoroughly attested occurrence of these marvels, possible only to the power of God, and therefore a proof of His good pleasure.

But in the case of the Little Flower, these marvels were so multiplied and fell in such showers, indeed like roses from heaven, that men were struck with wonder. Some indeed, and very good Catholics too, were slow to believe that such extraordinary things as were related had actually

happened. But whatever skepticism may exist concerning this or the other occurrence (a matter of evidence as we have remarked, and it is reasonable to demand specially good evidence before believing specially wonderful events), there can be no doubt of the sudden, world-wide and impressive gratitude of very many men and women who declare that they have been helped, blessed, delivered from danger or disease by the intercession of the Little Flower.

Six Hundred Witnesses

In the parlor of the Carmelite convent at Lisieux where Sœur Thérèse lived and died, there hang many military medals, sent thither by soldiers of all the armies of the allies, as *ex votos,* tokens of gratitude towards the nun who from heaven, as they confidently believe, came to succor and bless them. The writer of these pages, visiting the convent where Sœur Thérèse lived, made a rapid estimate that there were no less than six hundred of these tokens of gratitude, and the reader may consider how sincere a belief in the intercession of the Little Flower induced these six hundred soldiers, decorated for gallant service in the greatest of wars, to send their medals of honor to her convent; French, English, Belgians, Americans—men from every quarter of the earth.

We cite this instance, out of many similar ones, to illustrate how intimate and close is the relation

of believing Catholics with the dear souls who have finished their course on earth and gone to heaven. Such extraordinary manifestations are relatively rare, but the faith which prompts Catholics to pray for the aid of the blessed is common to all the faithful. Neither do Catholics expect that for all their prayers their friends in heaven will visit them with such singular and unusual favors. These miraculous happenings are, so to speak, the peaks and loftiest summits of supernatural gifts, which some individuals receive once in their lives. But the existence of such marvels and the faith in them which Catholics cherish serve to point the usual, everyday confidence and belief of Catholics that their friends in heaven can help them and do help them constantly, in the unseen and ordinary goodness of their influence and protection.

Their Daily Converse

Such a familiarity with the departed, such a daily and hourly communion with those who are in heaven, is the privilege and comfort of the ordinary Catholic faithful. In need or danger they turn instinctively to their heavenly friends and ask for aid. In joy they look to them for sympathy and share their rejoicing with them. The constant prayer to and communion with the saints in heaven, not sensible but through faith, is a fruit of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. Catholics do not go into darkened rooms

to evoke the souls of the departed. From such practices they would shrink in horror, knowing that if any preternatural being were to respond to such an invitation it would be a wicked and deluding spirit with whom they would not for the world hold any conference.

A Reasonable Satisfaction

Thus the craving of our nature for communion with the dear souls who have gone before us into eternity is satisfied by the teaching of the Church, while at the same time her children are preserved from the delusions and perplexities of those who try sensibly to commune with departed spirits.

On the one side are faith, self-restraint in bridling the desire for sensible communings with the dead, holy sympathy with the suffering in purgatory, rejoicing and confidence in the blessed in heaven, and a constant intercourse through prayer and intercession between the living and the dead.

On the other side there are delusion, perplexity, conflicting statements and theories, an ambiguous showing of tricks which can be produced by the mocking prestidigitator.

Which belief concerning communion with the dead is likely, from intrinsic evidence and probability, to be true? Which is in harmony with our nature, in agreement with the teachings of God? An unbiased weigher of likelihoods is not apt to be long in coming to a decision as between the Catholic and the spiritist.

CHAPTER III

SOME FURTHER INSTANCES—ST. AUGUSTINE, ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA, ETC.

To say that of all persons in the world, none others live in so constant and familiar intercourse with the dead as do Catholics may be a truism to the Catholics themselves. Yet for those outside the Church this statement will come as something of a surprise. It is literally correct. Go into Catholic churches in any land, and you will see men and women kneeling before the shrines of the Blessed Virgin and the saints, their lips moving in supplication, their eyes fixed on the image which represents to them here on earth the living and powerful being, once like themselves, but now blessed in heaven, to whom they pray. Their thoughts and intentions go beyond this statue or picture, which is only a reminder and representation to hold their attention and concentrate their thoughts. They are praying to, appealing to, speaking with a soul which is beyond the grave.

Their Posthumous Career

In thousands of places—in the haunts of canonized saints where they lived and suffered while on

earth, in the shrines erected to their memory—you will find today, all days, these groups of faithful friends and communers with the dead. While on earth, as we have elsewhere remarked, the saints like all living men and women had only a limited sphere of acquaintances, friends, companions and confidants. Now that they are in heaven the sphere of their influence is immensely widened, their life goes on in a glorified communion with their clients, their exploits are wonderful, they continue throughout the ages to glorify God and to help their fellowmen.

These posthumous careers of the saints are among the most astonishing of the facts of history. They offer an unique instance of the survival of human personalities and influences in despite of death and the tomb. The hero of the world dies, and his fame gradually withers to the circumference of histories. His name, if it is used at all, serves "to point a moral or adorn a tale." But the saints of God, are, to Catholics, living beings, unseen indeed but known intimately and loved devotedly, whose friendship is most precious, whose influence is most real, whose intercession is a most trusted and sure resource in danger and in sorrow.

The Multitude of Saints

The ordinary Catholics who depart this life in the grace of God are likewise still near to their

friends in this world. They are, it is natural to suppose, detained for some time in purgatory, and so they at once profit by their friends' prayers and penances in their behalf, and are able, as is piously believed, to pray in turn for those whom they have left on earth. This gives the living a double consolation and sense of communion, because they at the same time help and are helped by their departed—satisfying both the desires of friendship. Non-Catholics hardly understand how deep a consolation and satisfaction is the Catholic doctrine of purgatory to those who have lost their loved friends and relations by death.

Let us run over hurriedly some of the posthumous careers of the saints so as to illustrate what we mean by their continued communion with the living. In the fifth century after Christ, there died at Hippo in Africa a man with a singular history. He had been throughout his brilliant but unbridled youth a Manichaean, a follower of that weird heresy which admitted two principles of being, one the source of good and the other the cause of evil. Converted through the unwearying prayers of his mother, St. Monica, he gave himself heart and soul to the Catholic faith, was made a bishop, and edified the world by his writings and example. Then he died and was buried, nearly fourteen hundred years ago, and in the ordinary course of human history he would now be at most only an ancient writer, a name on the scroll of history.

After Fourteen Centuries

In point of fact, Saint Augustine is still, after fourteen centuries, a living personality. Many times every day someone, somewhere throughout the world, addresses him in intimate supplication, pleads for his help in temptation, asks to be delivered, as he was, from the dominion of the devil, seeks his aid in studies, confides his needs and asks help as from a father and friend. Saint Augustine, in the churches which have been built to his honor, in the monasteries governed by his rule, in the works named after him, is not a long-departed memory, he is a living and glorious intimate, who, though he has been these many centuries in heaven, still maintains and increases the circle of his living friendships, more effectively and with more constant interchange of kindly offices with thousands of men and women than was possible during his brief days on earth.

Again, in the pleasant town of Assisi in Umbria, there was born, some eight hundred years ago, a youth who was named Francis, a new name then, but now most usual throughout the whole earth for his sake. He was a joyous, free-handed, winsome youth, full of courtesy and sweetness, and for Christ's sake he gave up the world which smiled upon him and practiced poverty and self-denial—an example then, as now, sorely needed by mankind. He founded an order for men and another for women, and a third order for those who wished to practice perfection

in the world. And then he died. Again, in the course of secular history, his influence should have decreased in proportion as the slow years piled themselves above his tomb.

The Friends of St. Francis

The contrary has occurred. Widely as St. Francis was known and dearly as he was loved in his days on earth, there is no comparison between the number of his friends and intimates then and today. To Catholics he is not as one long dead but as a living and powerful friend, a companion to whom one prays, with whom one speaks daily and hourly. Go to Assisi and see the friends of St. Francis kneeling at his tomb, their lips moving in prayer, conversing with this man, so long departed, not as with one far away but as with a near presence, confident that their whispering voices will reach him unfailingly through the power of God, where he rejoices in the life of heaven.

At a thousand shrines throughout the world you may similarly see the friends and clients of St. Francis, conversing with him as with a dearly loved and trusted patron. What other religion can match such closeness of communion with the dead, who are living in the hereafter? Before what other tombs than those of the saints of God can you see men and women conversing with the departed with such faith and confidence? While the darkened chambers of spiritistic mediums

sometimes breed madness, these communings of Catholics with the saints always make for sanity, cleanness of soul, cheerful resignation, fidelity to duty—all the good results which we have a right to expect from legitimate intercourse with the great souls of the intimates of God.

St. Ignatius and His Comrade

We might multiply instances. Ignatius of Loyola has been dead more than three hundred years. So has his great son and companion in the wars of God, St. Francis Xavier. Yet these two men are living in the world through their influence and communion with their clients in a way incomprehensible to those who are not of the Catholic faith. Unseen, because their life is of a different plane from ours, they yet take part in the lives of men more efficaciously than was possible for them on earth. They exert influence, grant favors, secure by their intercession the benefits their clients beg of them, are trusted, honored, spoken to, and make reply in a manner that no living man can equal.

Hundreds and thousands of men and women in every land constantly have recourse to these dead heroes of God for help in perplexity, strength in trial, relief from sickness and sorrow; and they address them not as vague memories but as living patrons, able to hear and to heed the least prayer of those who trust in them. An answered prayer gives rise to still another peti-

tion the next time that sorrow or misfortune threatens or falls. Thus there is a constant action and interaction between these saints in heaven and their friends on earth, and the communion kept up between the living and the departed is as real and actual as that between comrades in this world.

St. John Francis Regis

One of the most singular examples of this trust and intercourse exists in the spot where is interred the body of St. John Francis Regis, a holy missionary of France, who died at La Louvesc in 1640, and was buried there, where he had fallen exhausted by the terrible hardships of a life which knew no rest and by the rigors of winter in the mountains. The simple country folk for whom he had worn his life away, responded to his heroic love for their souls by an age-long confidence and veneration. To this day, the personality of St. John Francis Regis is as real to them as that of any of their living townsmen, and they flock to his tomb to do him honor, and pray to him with an intensity of confidence and devotion which brings tears to the eyes of the lookers-on from other lands.

A Trustful Devotion

To their dear patron and friend they go in all trouble, as confidently as to a neighbor. They

speak to him as trustfully as they would to one of their familiar friends. One missionary in that district relates that he came to a home in the mountains where lay a poor fellow who had that morning fallen down from the roof he was mending and broken his leg below the knee. "Too bad," said the missionary, compassionately, "you will have to lose some time from your work."

"Yes," said the countryman, not very downcast, "three entire days."

"My good man" replied the missionary, "that leg will never be whole in three days!"[2]

"It will so," answered the countryman, counting on his fingers; "one day to go to La Louvesc, to the tomb of St. John Francis Regis, one day to stay there and be cured, and a third day to come along back home again. Is not that three days?" And the absolute conviction of his look and voice made the missionary suspect that he might be right after all, for in such ways does St. John Francis still deal with his votaries.

Here is a man who has been dead for more than two hundred years, living in the closest intimacy and confidence with the descendants of the folk for whom he gave his life, and manifesting his power and beneficence by continual signs as sensible as any benefactions well could be. This is a concrete and vivid instance surely of how the fervent Catholic holds constant and real intercourse with the souls of those who have departed this life in the love and friendship of God.

An Anniversary in Rome

So we might heap up instances. When the present writer was in Rome not long since, the Eternal City celebrated the three hundredth anniversary of the canonization, or the raising to the honors of the altar, of five great servants of God, each one of whom possesses still on earth an ever-widening circle of friends. These were: St. Philip Neri, in his life and ever since his death the favorite apostle of Rome, whom the people still pursue with enthusiastic devotion as they did while he walked their tortuous streets in the flesh; St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier, venerated and honored in a singular fashion all over the world; St. Teresa of Avila, dear and charming saint, whose writings constantly increase the circle of her intimates; and St. Isidore of Spain, a laborer, who died in Madrid in 1130, whose wife, like himself, is a canonized saint, and who, though his earthly life he lived far from courts and armies, became after his death the patron of kings and the familiar helper of great enterprises.

All these had been raised to the honors of the Church's altars in the year 1622. Even at that time they had all been long dead as the world speaks of death. Yet it was stirring to witness the enthusiastic devotion paid to them, not as historic memories but as living friends, by their clients in Rome. There was a magnificent ceremony at St. Peter's like a repetition of the splendid celebration of the canonizations there three

hundred years before. There were enthusiastic demonstrations of devotion, pealing hymns, exalted panegyrics. A great painting of the saints was exposed beneath the vast dome of the basilica, and throngs gathered to pray to these five beloved patrons.

Echoes in Other Places

This personal homage of the living on earth to the dead who are living in heaven, was carried out in many other places, in Rome and elsewhere, with a splendor that left no doubt of the fervor of the worshipers. At the Gesu in Rome (where St. Ignatius' relics rest and where the right arm of St. Francis Xavier, still incorrupt, with which he baptized hundreds of thousands, is kept on his altar) the celebrations lasted for several days. The whole dome of the vast edifice was lighted with countless lusters, and in the reflected glow crowds of men and women prayed before the shrines of the saints.

In the church of Santa Maria Nuova where St. Philip Neri's relics are kept in a splendid shrine, the throngs were likewise continuous, come thither to pray to and to greet the good Father Philip. They bore his remains about the streets in solemn procession. No one, looking on, could doubt for an instant that their communion with this saint of God, dead so many years, was tender and familiar, that he was a friend they could trust to hear them and to assist them in any circumstances.

The National Rejoicings

Meanwhile word came of national celebrations in the lands where these saints had lived or whence they were sprung. In Spain, whole cities turned out in gala array to welcome a relic of St. Ignatius sent them from Rome. Processions wound through the countryside from one town to another, escorting the precious relic which represented the friend in heaven whom each delighted to honor. All over the world swept the wave of fervent love which had had its origin there in St. Peter's where multitudes had sat beneath the great dome and had done honor to these friends in heaven.

We have adduced these instances of the friendship which exists in the Catholic Church between the living and the dead—the communion of thoughts and sympathies, the exchange of love and petition on one side, for love and celestial favors on the other—to emphasize how admirably the Catholic faith responds to the craving of our nature for some intercourse with those we love who have passed away from earth. Compare, let us say again, this warmth of love, this fidelity of remembrance, this sweetly sane and salutary intercourse with the blessed departed, with anything which any other form of belief has dared to promise. Without deceit or mummery, without darkness or concealment, with no truckling to the baser curiosity of man or pandering to his desire for sensible experiences, the Church

throughout the ages promotes and teaches this true and secure communion with the dead which is a part of the kind and merciful Providence of God.

The World Beyond

Some scientists, and many more who proclaim themselves scientific have declared that at last, through the efforts of spiritists and psychic researchers, we are on the eve of proving scientifically the reality of the world beyond the grave. This assertion smacks even more of ignorance than of effrontery. If they knew how complete, how satisfying and reassuring is the evidence which multiplied and well-attested instances of the communion between the living and the departed afford as they are found in the chronicles of Catholic history, knew how firm is the well-grounded faith of Catholics in the communion of the saints as witnessed by the word of God, they would abate their enthusiasm for the ambiguous "discoveries" of mediums.

Here, as in so many other instances, the truth of God as preserved by the Catholic Church, the Guardian of truth, is sober, reasonable, exalted, in accord with our higher nature, satisfying, sensible. The cheap substitutes with which men have proposed to replace this divine truth can hardly be said to merit these noble adjectives.

CHAPTER IV

EARTHLY FAME AND HEAVENLY COMMUNION—ST. JOAN OF ARC; ST. MARGARET MARY

It will perhaps be said by some readers at this juncture, that, after all, the Church has no monopoly of this communion with the spirit-world on which we have been dwelling. The world itself cherishes the memories of great men and women and preserves their thoughts in literature and their deeds in history. Nations have their shrines of heroic fame where the folk assemble on national anniversaries to honor the recollection of the glorious dead. Their deeds while on earth are rehearsed in panegyrics. Their counsels are recalled, their example is held up for the imitation of their fellow citizens. All this makes them survive in recollection long after their departure from life and gives them an existence beyond the grave.

A Communing of Memory

It is quite true that nations and groups of people do in this way continue a certain communion with the departed. But it is a communion not in

the true sense of an interchange of thoughts, kindness, love and confidence on the one hand and love and benefits on the other such as exists between the members of the Catholic Church still living upon earth and their brothers and sisters who have gone to heaven. In the one case there is only memory. Even a man who is a complete skeptic as to the existence of a future life and who considers that death is the end-all of human existence can thus remember the departed and commune, in this imperfect and partial sense, with the illustrious dead. There is here no real continuance of intercourse between the living and the departed.

A World of Difference

The Communion of Saints, in the Catholic Church, is different by a whole world's width from such mere recollection. It is—because of the living faith of Catholics in the Church's teaching of the continued existence of the departed friends of God and their power to hear and help those on earth—a daily interchange of prayer and recollection on the one side, of intercession and kindness on the other. The Catholic whose faith is vivid and real, lives in close intimacy with the saints. To them he speaks with more confidence of being heard than when he addresses his friends who live on earth. These he sees and hears, but of those other throngs of kind and glorious familiars he is assured by the certi-

tude of faith, more strong than the testimony of his senses. The long experience of life confirms his confidence in these celestial intercessors. The witness of others who have received signal favors from heaven's company of angels and saints strengthens his reliance on their intercession. How different is this living intercourse and communion from the cold memory which history gives to the great of other days.

The Heroine of Rouen

Not long since, in the course of a continental journey, the author passed through the old city of Rouen and paused for a day to visit and venerate the places made forever glorious by the sufferings and triumph of Joan of Arc. The career of this lovely and heroic maiden, the veneration shown to her, illustrate strikingly what we have been endeavoring to express. All the world knows the story of this heroine. Done to death by the darkest treachery, when she had scarcely reached the age of womanhood, startling and wonderful in her meteoric flight across the skies of history as some shooting star which leaps in an instant from one horizon to the other, filling the world with light before it vanishes in darkness, her career is part of the heritage of humanity, her memory will be as immortal as the race of man.

She united in a marvelous way qualities apparently incompatible and which compel us to

admire and to love her. With the innocence and gentleness of a country maiden she joined a military genius which could turn back the tides of defeat at their darkest hour and break a power of arms at which the sturdiest soldiers of France looked in despair. Brave in battle, compassionate in victory, forgiving of injuries, patient in afflictions, courageous and unconquered in the face of all the dark wiles of her sordid and unscrupulous foes, she gathers to herself the lilies of maidenhood, the laurels of victory, the roses of martyrdom. It is no wonder that poets have exulted in her eulogy, historians become spendthrift of their praise, and that her whole nation has taken her to its heart as the first of its heroines. Joan of Arc, Maid of Orleans, will be forever a national heroine, a heroine of all humanity.

The National Reverence

All through France and especially at Rouen which saw her execution, there are not wanting tokens of the national veneration. The prison where she languished is shown to crowds of visitors. In the market place, where she met her fiery death, a tablet recalls to the passer-by that sacred recollection. The walls which witnessed her trials are likewise distinguished by mural inscriptions. In a public square, her statue (looking, it must be confessed, very much like that of a goddess of liberty!) has stood for generations. Every year civic celebrations recall her memory.

So too, in the square at Orleans, stands a great monument to Joan the Maid. The spot where she drove back the English forces is pointed out to the traveler. Throughout all France one may see statues, monuments, inscriptions, to the honor of *la Pucelle d'Orleans.*

Yet in all this there is no real communion with the living and heroic spirit which leapt from the burning pyre at Rouen and left there her glorious ashes and her bleeding heart, which the fires would not consume. There is question here only of civic honors, of historic memory, of the recollection of a sublime personality. In all this even a skeptic, even an atheist, can consistently participate.

The Church's Declaration

But now the Church, having concluded a long and painstaking inquiry into the life, the works, the spirit, the words, of Joan of Arc, solemnly declares with the authority of her divine mission, that this pure maiden lived a life distinguished by heroic virtues of faith, and hope and love of God and man. She is raised to the honor of the Church's altars. She is first declared blessed, then canonized, and now St. Joan of Arc has a place in the Church's calendar, is publicly proposed for the veneration of the faithful.

At once the living communion between thousands and hundreds of thousands of souls on earth and this holy spirit in heaven takes on a char-

acter which utterly eclipses in its intimate converse, in its daily friendship, all the formal honors of civic holidays. The greater life of Joan the Maid increases gloriously on earth, to endure for ages. She hears the prayers of countless clients who appeal to her to intercede for them with God in all their necessities. For some she obtains the ordinary and daily graces of fidelity, perseverance, purity in the midst of conflict, courage in the face of trials. For others, she secures more singular and striking favors, miraculous cures, preservation from great dangers, the granting of important petitions. Without the Church she is only remembered. Within the Church she lives a life real, majestic, glorious, beyond all the dreams of poets or heroes. She is a friend, a patroness, a model, a guide, for thousands upon thousands.

Where Men Pray to St. Joan

To realize this, come for a moment from the market place at Rouen where we have been looking with awe at that spot in the pavement where stood of old the pyre of Joan of Arc. Let us turn aside into the little chapel hard by, the precursor of a great basilica which will soon arise in her honor over the spot made holy by her sufferings. Outside, men come to recall the memory of Joan of Arc. Here in her chapel, they come to pray to her. Those who without had curiously read the inscription and looked about with won-

dering eyes, now fall on their knees, close their eyes in recollection, and with murmuring lips speak directly to her, to her who has so long been dead, with the absolute assurance that she, by the power of God, will hear and answer them.

They do not doubt that she went from her ordeal of fire into the bosom of God. They know, by faith, that their least whisper of prayer will reach her in heaven and move her to pity. Here you may see strong men pleading with her to ask for them, from God, a courage like her own. Here maidens pray to her for that same purity which in her own heart withstood the violence and the fraud of her oppressors. Here mothers ask favors for their daughters and their sons. Here consecrated virgins kneel to beg the Maiden of Orleans to obtain for them courage and perseverance like hers. How incomparably more real, more intimate, and living is this communion with Joan the saint, than is any merely earthly recollection of Joan the heroine.

The Glory of Louis XIV

Let us take another example from the history of this nation which preserves in its annals such examples of worldly splendor and of unearthly sanctity. The year 1647 saw Louis XIV, then but nine years of age, already at the beginning of his long and splendid reign. He had already been four years on the throne. He was to live and rule to the ripe age of seventy-seven, to be

for seventy-two years the monarch of a great nation. His reign was to be illustrious in literature, in art, in war, in the elegancies of refined society, in the brilliance of conversation, the polish of manners, the splendor of ceremony. About his throne were to be grouped a galaxy of geniuses. Great authors — Racine, Molière, Boileau, La Fontaine, Fenélon, Corneille, the classics of French literature, great artists—Puget, Poussin, Le Brun—were to gather about him, to bask in the warmth of his kingly patronage.

He was to be served by illustrious commanders, Condé and Luxembourg, Turenne, Vendome, Villars; explorers like Trouville and Duchesne, were to extend his glory. Some of the most eminent of preachers were to declare to his court the word of God—Bourdaloue and Massillon and Bossuet—whose printed discourses convey some notion of their sacred eloquence. He was to go to war in person and conquer cities and nations, Flanders, Strassburg, Franche, Comté. He was to give his name to a whole epoch and to leave a great legacy of glory to his nation. Living, he was the object of an almost religious worship; dead, he is but a fading memory. The moment of his death set also the period of his greatness. Who nowadays seeks to commune with the spirit of this once splendid king?

An Humble Subject of the King

On the 22nd of July in this same year of 1647, there was born at Verosvres in France, a girl

distinguished by none of the lordly lineage and worldly prospects of Louis XIV. She was the child of bourgeois parents, and they gave her the name of Margaret Mary Alacoque. Timid, awkward, retiring, this little maiden, though endowed with judgment and good sense, was without the attributes of genius. She suffered hardships and humiliations in her youth from unkind relatives, bearing them all with the sweetest charity for love of Christ. She practised penance and good works, living in the seclusion of her own modest family circle, until, at the age of twenty-four, she entered the Visitation Convent at Paray-le-Monial, an obscure little village which has stood unnoticed for a thousand years upon a hillside of central France.

The Apostle of a Great Devotion

Delicate of constitution, sensitive and retiring, she was chosen by Christ to be the apostle of the great devotion to His Sacred Heart. Again and again, she received from Him the revelation of His burning desire that men should make reparation for the outrages and injuries heaped upon Him, should console Him by their devotion to that Heart which as He Himself declared to her "had so loved men and been so little loved by them in return."

After a life spent in the obscurity of the cloister, in the midst of trials from within and without her, full of obedience, humility and

charity, praying to be forgotten and despised for the love of Christ, she was consumed at last by the love of the Sacred Heart and died at the age of forty-three, still unknown save to a little circle of her Sisterhood and to her own humble family.

An Ever-increasing Fame

No very likely rival this to the glory of the great King Louis XIV, who at the moment of her death was just entering upon the high noon of his glory! Yet as his fame has lessened with the years, the glory of Margaret Mary Alacoque has gone on increasing, and at this present time she is loved, appealed to, thought of tenderly, spoken to daily, by thousands upon thousands.

After her death and during the French Revolution, her Sisters were driven from their convent, but they carried with them her sacred bones. They brought these back when the convent was repurchased after many years. Miraculous favors were granted through her intercession. The devotion of which she was the apostle triumphed over all its adversaries and spread through the civilized world. In March, 1824, Leo XII pronounced her venerable, in September, 1864, Pius IX declared her blessed. In 1919, after her teaching and all her actions had been subjected to the severest scrutiny, Pope Benedict XV decreed her solemn canonization and, as St. Margaret Mary, proposed her to the admiration of the universal Church.

After Two and a Half Centuries

It was our privilege to dwell in Paray for some months during the year of jubilee, 1920-1921, which followed the canonization of St. Margaret Mary. Here indeed was a striking and singular phenomenon. Two hundred and thirty years after her holy death, this humble virgin seemed more alive in the town whither she had come to dwell and die, than in the days of her mortal life. Her sacred relics, the most precious possession of the place, lay in state before the altar of the chapel near the spot where during life she had so often knelt all night in prayer. To this shrine came a constant concourse of pilgrims, some from close at hand, some from the uttermost parts of the earth. There they knelt, not to recall merely the memory of one long dead but to speak intimately to her, with the utmost confidence of being heard, to tell of their hopes and fears and trials as to a most trusted friend. The lips of youth and of age moved in silent communion with this departed friend of God and of mankind. This was no mere civic ceremony, but the sacred love and homage of multitudes of human hearts.

The Triumphal Year

All the year long, at frequent intervals, the relics of St. Margaret Mary were borne in triumphal processions through the streets of Paray. Festal arches spanned the narrow

thoroughfares. Great pilgrimages came for a day of veneration and communion with the saint, and melted away at evening, speeding back on special trains to their homes to take up again the grind of daily life refreshed and purified by contact with this heavenly influence. The Chapel of the Visitation and the great basilica near by, built by the Monks of Cluny in ancient days, resounded with panegyrics of Margaret Mary, hymns in her honor, the supplications of multitudes pleading for her intercession. What a triumph for this meek maïden who in her lifetime experienced so much opposition, felt such suffering, was consumed by such self-forgetful love.

The processions, by special privilege, penetrated even the cloistered gardens where St. Margaret Mary used to walk and commune with God. By thousands upon thousands the devout pilgrims walked reverently through the paths made holy by her feet. Her name was upon their lips in constant supplication. Her sweet memory and unseen presence made music in their hearts.

Where Rests the Grand Monarch?

Which one of all these pilgrims, or of the throngs of devout worshipers who filled the churches of France and of all the world in honor of Margaret Mary, knew or cared where rest the ashes of the Grand Monarch, Louis XIV? He has departed and is forgotten. She, the humblest of his subjects during life, has become glorious

above thousands, and continues through her intercession, through the wonders she wins from God for her clients, through the ever-increasing number of her friends on earth, a glorious life-after-death which has no parallel in secular history.

These instances vividly illustrate the singular character of that communion with the dead which is possible only within the Catholic Church. To her children in this world their brothers and sisters in heaven are as real, as truly within reach of their cries for assistance, as willing—and far more able—to succor them, as any who are upon earth. Death for them is not a separation in spirit from those whom they love and reverence, it is only a bodily parting. The communion of minds and souls is made more easy by death.

Many of the friends of God who have been raised to the altars of the Church and proposed to the veneration of all the faithful, were, while living, very obscure, or at least were known and loved only by a limited circle of friends. Death bursts the bonds of their spirit and not only sets them forever in the bright circle of the blessed in heaven, but opens their ears and their hearts to the petitions of millions of clients and friends on earth. Here, while living, they could speak with and listen to only those about them. Now, from the heights of heaven, with glorified faculties and with intelligence and love immensely multiplied by the beatific vision, they can hear and help the whole circle of the earth.

Her Increasing Fame

From the entire world, there arise day by day to the ears of Margaret Mary in heaven, the cries of love, of supplication, of tenderness from thousands and thousands of devoted hearts. She, the simple country maiden, who, while on earth, shrank from the observation of those about her, and desired to be hidden with Christ in God, now beholds her statues exposed for veneration in a thousand churches, hears the peals of triumphal anthems celebrating the glories with which God has crowned His handmaid, witnesses the long processions and the solemn ceremonials of jubilee wherewith her sacred relics are honored upon earth.

The fame of historic personages dwindles and grows dim like a light left far behind in the distance, seen faintly through the lengthening corridors of the years. The glory of the saints, fostered by their living presence in the Church, their familiar intercourse with throngs of grateful clients, the constant and intimate communion of the increasing multitudes, the heavenly favors they bestow, grows brighter and brighter with the passing of time. Their life-after-death is no figment of poetic imagination, no convention of flattering history. It is a life real beyond imagining, active beyond conjecture, a personal, intimate, constant, efficacious following-out of that career which they began in obscure fidelity on earth. It is a life more broad, more complete, more generous and great than all our feeble minds can conjecture or our feeble hearts conceive.

CHAPTER V

THE RANKS OF THE BLESSED

The beautiful solicitude of the Catholic Church to keep fresh the memory on earth of her children who are departed for heaven is to be seen in the long array of feasts with which she honors her saints. Millions of her children have indeed left this world in the evident grace of God, and millions upon millions—"a great multitude, which no man could number," to use the words of St. John in the seventh chapter of the Apocalypse—are entered into ecstatic bliss, glorious with God in heaven for all coming ages.

But there are some heroic souls who have loved God and man with so singular an eminence that they have been selected for especial remembrance. God and man conspire to choose these exemplars for the Church's honor and reverence. Man keeps their memory, asks their prayers and thus gives occasion, so to say, for God to vouchsafe miracles through their intercession. But it is God Who puts the seal on their sanctity by working evident wonders, not possible for natural forces to accomplish. It is only when this interposition of God's power by indisputable miracles attests their

holiness that men and women who have died are raised to the altars of the Church and have place in the calendar of the saints.

The Chaplet of the Seasons

Every month of the year shines with these heroic memories of the great departed. Besides the feasts of Christ and of His glorious and blessed Mother, which like greater jewels of purest light recur in the chaplet of the seasons, the whole year is variegated with feasts of the saints, a celestial procession, which lift the mind of the devout and well-taught Catholic continually to the heavens, and keep up in his heart a constant communion with the bright world beyond the tomb.

In January, the first name on the calendar after that of Christ in His Circumcision, is that of the octave of St. Stephen, the first martyr, who offered his brave blood in testimony to the Faith, the leader of that long line of glorious witnesses who continue to our own time and will doubtless go on shedding their blood until the crack of doom. Next comes the octave of St. John, the Apostle and Evangelist; then follows that of the Holy Innocents. Next occurs the Epiphany of the Lord, with its own octave—its eight successive days of commemoration—which prolong through another week the savor and sweetness of the feast. There follow, in seemly order, the feasts of a group of confessors of the Faith: of

St. Hilary, Bishop and Doctor; of St. Paul, the first hermit; of St. Anthony, hermit also, and who visited St. Paul in his solitude and joined with him in celestial converse when the old servant of God was about to leave his weary body in the desert and go to join the choirs of the blessed.

The Splendor of Martyrs

A group of martyrs, ruddy with their own blood, poured out so generously for Christ, now claim the pages of the calendar of saints. St. Marcellus, Pope and Martyr; Sts. Fabian and Sebastian, names splendid in the story of the early Church at Rome; St. Agnes, dear little lamb, brave as a lion for her Spouse's sake; Sts. Vincent and Anastasius, martyrs likewise, and honored together. St. Peter and St. Paul are likewise remembered in January, the one on the feast commemorative of his fixing his seat at Rome (a momentous memory for the Church), and the other on the day which celebrates his conversion—when Saul the persecutor became Paul the Apostle.

Other noble confessors have place in the calendar of January. St. Raymond of Penafort, St. John Chrysostom, St. Francis de Sales; chivalrous names in the knighthood of the Cross, who honored Christ by the eloquence of their stainless lives even more than by the words of burning zeal which they uttered with mouth or pen. So the first month of the year offers an

epitome of the calendar of the saints, and the various list continues through the four seasons, always raising the thoughts now to one now to another of the servants of God who have gone before us into bliss.

Memories of February

In February it is St. Ignatius, the great-souled Bishop of Antioch, who longed to be ground like wheat in the arena by the teeth of the lions, that he might become true bread of Christ, who begins the month's sublime commemorations. Then follow such saints as St. Agatha, St. John of Matha, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Peter Damian —to mention only some of the names best known in history—and last St. Matthias, Apostle of the Lord.

March brings the recollection of St. Thomas of Aquin, the Angelic Doctor, prince of theologians; of St. Frances of Rome, that well-beloved woman whose sweet memory is still fragrant in the streets of the Eternal City; of St. Joseph, spouse of the Virgin Mother of God; of St. Patrick, Patriarch and Apostle of Ireland; and St. Benedict, who in the West, at Subiaco, and then on the fair sun-drenched heights of Monte Cassino, laid the foundations of that religious life in the West, which has made the world blossom with virgins. In this same month comes the commemoration of the Annunciation of the Most Blessed Virgin herself, and just

after it the feast of two of her valiant champions, St. John Capistran and St. John Damascene, one of the West and the other of the East, far apart in time and space but one in faith and devotion to Mary.

A Galaxy of Confessors

So does April continue the glorious series, with the feasts of St. Isidore, great Bishop and learned Doctor; of St. Vincent Ferrer, worker of stupendous wonders; of St. Leo, Pope and scholar, whose urbane and pious homilies still delight the soul after many centuries; of St. Paul of the Cross, founder of the Congregation of the Passion, who sleeps in Rome above the ancient house of St. John and Paul on the Caelian Hill. In this month also comes the feast of St. Hermenegild, the Gothic Prince who laid down his life for the faith of Christ, choosing a heavenly rather than an earthly crown; of St. Mark the Evangelist, and last, but not least glorious, of St. Catherine of Sienna, that sweet virgin, counsellor of popes and kings, savior of cities, the fragrance of whose pure love for God and men perfumes the ages. Her shrine, beneath her fair effigy in Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, still draws loving pilgrims as a rose in June draws bees to its petals.

The Calendar of May

We go on through May, where the names of Sts. Philip and James, Apostles of the Lord, are

written at the portal. There await us the great names also of St. Athanasius, defender of orthodoxy; of St. Monica, whose prayers and tears, for twenty years, pleaded with heaven for her son Augustine, and bore him again, in a more agonizing travail, to be a Doctor of the Church and the light of after ages. It is difficult to choose from among the illustrious names of May. Here is the commemoration of St. John Evangelist's victory outside the Latin Gate, when he came forth unscathed from the caldron of boiling oil. Here the remembrance of the apparition of St. Michael, when that Prince of God's Army was seen on the summit of old Hadrian's tomb, sheathing his sword and putting an end to the ravaging plague.

St. Peter Celestine is likewise commemorated in this month, the meek monk who was made Pope against his will, and who laid down the too heavy burden of the Papacy to build himself a solitude in the Vatican where he could commune with God in prayer. Here is St. Philip Neri's feast, whereat Rome always rejoices; and side by side, both great figures in English history though parted in time by centuries, the Venerable Bede, gentle light of England, and St. Augustine, apostle of the English nation, are remembered in succession on the altars of the Church.

The Coronal of June

So does June glisten with heroic names, preserved in yearly memory. St. Barnabas the

Apostle is honored with a feast in June. So is St. Margaret, Queen and Widow, she whose old chapel yet stands in Edinburgh Castle. She longed to devote her life to God's service in the cloister, but became Malcom's wife, gentle mother of her people, the friend of the weak, the helper of the poor. In this month comes the feast of St. Anthony of Padua, still, in these days as in his own, the wonder-worker, whose bones rest in his splendid shrine in Padua, but whose memory lives throughout the earth.

St. Basil the Great, St. Aloysius of Gonzaga, St. Paulinus, come one after the other on this roll of fame, each with his particular glory. The first was sublime for his learning and heroism alike, and lived to an extreme old age, full of wisdom as of holiness. The second had not long offered up his princely coronet to God when he bore the lilies of his unspotted youth to heaven. The third, a Roman patrician, rich beyond computing, gave up fabulous possessions and lived a long life in God's service, thus combining in some sort the separate glories of the other two. Out of such differing ages and periods of the world they have met in heaven and their names meet here in the calendar of the Church.

July's Remembrances

July is similarly rich in glorious recollections. Here is the commemoration of St. Elisabeth, Queen and Widow, whose unearthly beauty of

character and tender sweetness of charity has pointed many a moral and adorned many a moving tale. Near by her feast is that of St. John Gaulbert, once a fiery and revengeful warrior, whose adventure in the narrow pass where he disarmed his enemy and spared that suppliant's life for Christ's sweet sake, lives in history. On the heights above Florence, in the lovely but now lonely church of San Miniato, one can pray on the spot where the crucified Christ bowed down His head to Gualbert who went forth a saint from that great encounter.

Their Various Careers

St. Bonaventure's name in this month likewise breathes forth the sweetest odor of holiness. He was so good and gentle, this son of St. Francis' predilection, that men said of him that he seemed not to have fallen in Adam. Hard by his name is that of St. Henry the Emperor, whose kingly spirit was conquered by the love of Christ; of St. Alexius, who by a singular inspiration left his home and became a vagabond for love of God; of St. Camillus of Lellis, who, a discharged soldier, gamester, quarreler, was so moved by some passing words of holy exhortation from a monk at the monastery where he toiled for his bread, that he forsook all wickedness and became the father of the sick and abandoned poor. He is the patron of hospitals and of nurses.

Next to his feast comes that of St. Vincent

de Paul, pioneer of organized charities, who did such enduring service for the wretched, the forsaken and the poor. Then, soon after, is celebrated the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, not the only poor, sinful woman who has become a saint of the Church, to show forth the healing power of penance. That which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her, and to encourage to repentance and sanctity those who lie in sin. Last of the month, a saint whose works still live after him, comes Ignatius of Loyola, youth of fashion and pride, mature penitent, old General of an Army more powerful and more meek than any of which his youthful fancies dreamed. July is glorious also with the feast of St. James the Apostle, and of St. Anne, mother of the Mother of God.

The Honor Roll of August

In the calendar for August occur the names of St. Alphonsus de Liguori, whose life, long beyond the common fashion of the flesh, was all luminous with toil, with sanctity and with wonders. He was a great lover of the Blessed Mother—and so also was the great St. Dominic, whose feast follows close after, and who conquered heresy by the power of the rosary and founded an illustrious order. The name of St. Lawrence evokes heroic recollections. He could make so light of his sufferings as to call out from his flaming torture to his executioners, "I am well done indeed—turn me and eat!" At the name

of St. Clare, the virgin follower of St. Francis, how many holy legends start to memory! In that small, precious monastery on the plain before Assisi, you may gaze on the upper door from which she repulsed the Saracens with the Sacred Host, and may walk and pray in the poor refectory where she sat with her sisters.

This month, too, comes the feast of St. Joachim the father of the Blessed Virgin, and but a little farther on that of St. Bernard, the honey-tongued, whose praise of the Mother of God is so sweet that it fills her modern singers with a holy envy. St. Rose of Lima, our American Saint, blooms also with fragrance in this August calendar, with the other roses. And grandly the month goes out with the memory of the great St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, whose delayed conversion was granted to his mother's prayer after the hope deferred of twenty tearful years.

The Saints of September

September brings back the memory of King Stephen, who so glowed with charity as he walked barefoot through the snow on his mission of mercy to the poor, that his shivering servant was fain to step in his footprints and be warmed. Here too comes St. Joseph of Cupertino, who is the patron of dull students, for he also labored in vain at his books, but his life is filled with wonders.

The feast of St. Januarius, at Naples, renews

on the nineteenth of September the startling phenomenon of the liquefaction of his blood. The present writer has seen the contents of that antique phial melt before his eyes at Naples on this feast, and drip and grow liquid like freshly-shed blood. St. Jerome likewise is honored this month, the fiery, loving, studious man who set all the Bible into the Latin tongue, swiftly but so exactly that his translation is most honored still.

October's Feasts

October opens with the memory of that St. Remigius who was the apostle of the warlike Franks, and dared, so says the legend, address to Clovis as he bowed for the waters of Baptism, these ringing words, "Bow thy neck, proud Sicambrian, to receive the lowly yoke of Christ, burn what hitherto thou hast adored, and adore That which hitherto thou hast burned." Now too comes the commemoration of the Angel Guardians, the patient and loving spirits who stand by the side of men and minister to them unseen through all their lives. So does the feast of St. Francis, most beloved saint of poverty, simplicity and love, whose memory is as sweet and green on the fair hills of Umbria and in his town of Assisi as when he walked there and taught his townsmen the direct way to heaven.

Near his name, is that of St. Teresa, most illustrious, perhaps, of the women of these latter ages, great of heart, great of intellect, great in

the love of God and most greatly favored with mystic gifts and wonders.

> "Poet and Saint, to thee alone are given,
> Two of the rarest names in earth or Heaven!"

Her great friend St. Peter of Alcantara is here also, who made a pact with his body to allow it on earth neither rest nor ease, and of whom she tells that austerity had made his flesh most like the bark of an ancient tree, but his soul was most glorious before the angels.

All Saints and All Souls

At the threshold of November stands the splendid and significant Feast of All Saints, followed directly by the commemoration of all the souls in purgatory. In the first, the Church, like a proud mother, gathers into one great festivity, which she makes glorious with pomp and liturgy, the memory of all her children who have ever attained the peace and brightness of heaven, calling them all saints for they are for all ages holy with God. On the next day she renews each year the memory of those others, cherished children also, who are still prisoners of the King in the atoning fires of purgatory and need still the prayers of their brethren on earth. Both are moving commemorations, for the one reminds us how many of our own friends and fellows are now splendid and happy forever, while the other makes us reflect on our own probable sojourn in

those purifying fires before we shall achieve a similar bliss.

Two Singular Memories

Midway in November come on the same day two feasts of singular memories, those of St. Martin, the Bishop, and of St. Mennas, the Martyr. The story of the sainted Bishop of Tours is well known—how he was a Roman soldier, and gave half of his coat to a beggar for pure charity, and how Christ appeared to Him, saying "Behold the cloak which Martin the catechumen has given Me." But of St. Mennas, another soldier, and likewise a martyr, not so many know the singular history. His shrine became a place of pilgrimage like the shrine of Lourdes in our own time, and hundreds of thousands used to resort to the holy springs about his tomb, as they do to Lourdes today, hoping to be cured of their diseases. Now his fame is known but to few, and he has only a commemoration on the feast of St. Martin of Tours.

In November come also the feasts of St. Gertrude and St. Cecilia; the one a great mystic of the Middle Ages whose fervent prayers are still a favorite with many Catholics, the other that glorious virgin of early Christian times, whose body rests in her former house in the Trastevere of Rome, with those of her husband and her brother-in-law, won to God by her exhortations and her prayers. Her body was found in the cemetery of Prætextatus, wrapped in costly robes

of gold brocade, and with the cloths soaked in her blood still lying at her feet. St. Gregory the wonder-worker has his feast in this month; so has St. Clement I, and St. Catherine, Virgin and Martyr, both much honored in the Eternal City.

Heart-warming December

December links the last of the year with the first, for it contains not only the feast of the Nativity, but those of St. Stephen, the first Martyr, and St. John the Evangelist, with whose octaves, or eight days' memory our enumeration of the feasts was begun in January. About Christmas there clusters a whole group of heart-warming recollections. St. Francis Xavier, that apostle of modern days who imitated so grandly the exploits of the first preachers of the Gospel, baptising hundreds of thousands, is remembered early in the month. So is St. Nicholas, the charitable Bishop whose name has been corrupted into Santa Claus, and whose gentle memory has been unworthily caricatured in a Winter Elf, that has nothing but the name of the "good Santa Claus" of the Germanic peoples.

St. Ambrose, whose preaching helped so much to convert St. Augustine, and who is, like him, a Doctor of the Church, is also venerated in December, and so is St. Lucia, Virgin and Martyr, whose praises echo on the melodious voices of the fishermen of the Neapolitan bay. St. Thomas the Apostle has his feast only four days before Chris-

mas, and four days after is celebrated the commemoration of another St. Thomas, this time the martyr of Canterbury, the gifted and heroic prelate who stained with his blood the stones of his cathedral at Canterbury, dying bravely for the liberties of the Church, and leaving to one of the loveliest minsters in England one of the most glorious of memories.

The Fruits of Veneration

Merely to understand and to follow the successive commemorations of the saints, to pray each day to those of the blessed who are that day recalled in the "Proper" of the mass, establishes for the faithful soul a communion with the other world as salutary as it is beautiful and consoling. To associate much with noble and pure characters of earth is an effective means to grow more noble and more pure. To read of great and holy men educates to greatness. Both these advantages of memory and association are given to her children by the Catholic Church by means of the veneration of the saints.

CHAPTER VI

COMMUNION WITH THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

If those outside the Church can hardly appreciate or realize how intimately good Catholics may live in communion with the saints departed, they know still less of that constant, tender, mutual friendship and confidence which exists between Catholics and the gentle and loving Virgin who is the Mother of God. The genuineness of this relation of mother on the one side and loving child on the other, which links the soul of every devout Catholic with the blessed soul of God's Mother, is a matter of daily experience to those who enjoy its precious treasure. It offers a singular example of that close communion of the living on earth with the blessed in heaven which exists in the Church of Christ.[1]

It is now more than eighteen hundred years since the most pure Virgin, whom the Son of God had chosen to be His Mother according to the flesh, breathed her last upon earth. During her later life she had been the Mother of the

[1] For a fuller treatment of this delightful subject see *The Most Beloved Woman*, by the same author.

infant Church, and an object of the most singular devotion. The Apostles sought her advice and intercession. So did all the family of the faithful. Upon her death began that still wider motherliness of hers whereby not hundreds but thousands and millions pray to her daily, confide to her their needs, fears, joys, sorrows, ask her aid constantly and confidingly in all the vicissitudes of their lives. While she lived on earth, only those could speak with her who enjoyed her bodily presence among them. Now, after her death, the whole world may whisper its petitions, and she can hear in heaven the pleadings of opposite poles of the world.

A Constant Devotion

The universality of devotion to Mary is everywhere and at all times one of the most striking phenomena of Catholic life. In regard to other servants of God, devotion waxes and wanes, it is found here and not there, it varies with the preference of times and persons. But devotion to the Blessed Virgin flourishes everywhere and in all Catholic hearts. As we have said, long ago in the East devotion was great to St. Mennas the Martyr. His shrine was a place of pilgrimage whence wonderful cures were reported and there thousands on thousands resorted to pray and be healed. Today the ruins of his shrine have lately been uncovered from the sands of the desert. But now, as then, devotion to the Blessed Virgin

is a mark of Catholic fervor. In the dimness of the Roman Catacombs the wondering visitor traces on the walls those earliest images of the Virgin and the Child, the work of the first christians, which are so identical in inspiration and meaning with the ones we place on the walls and over the altars of our churches of today.

Many Modes of Honor

The face of the world is covered with shrines, churches, institutions, which are dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. All the religious orders and congregations of the Catholic communion are consecrated to her. The Catholic home which has not some honored and beautiful statues or pictures of the Mother of God is poor indeed, and hardly worthy of being called a Catholic home. In the official prayers of the Church, as in the favorite devotions used in private by Catholics, the name of Mary occurs constantly. Many of the splendid cathedrals of Europe, those sublime epitomes of beauty, where all the arts have conspired to praise God and to body forth the loftiest aspirations of mankind, are dedicated to the Mother of God. Her image smiles from their walls, holding in her arms the Divine Infant, of Whom she was the temple and the shrine as these vast cathedrals are shrines of that same Child in the Blessed Sacrament. It would need volumes upon volumes only to enumerate the good works, the churches, the institutions, the orders and con-

gregations, the works of art, the books, the towns, cities, nations, peoples, dedicated to the Virgin Mother.

Her Daily Intimacy

Yet perhaps more dear to her than all this universal praise is the daily, intimate part which she has in the life of every Catholic who is worthy of the name. Though she has been dead, according to our manner of speech (that is to say, living in heaven), for these more than eighteen hundred years, the constant communion between her and her children upon earth forms a phenomenon of Catholic life most universal, touching and impressive. Every hour of the day from hopeful waking to weary night, the sons and daughters of the Virgin Mother throughout the world, by millions upon millions, speak to her constantly, confide to her their trials and needs, seek consolation from her motherly heart, rely on her for protection, are encouraged by the thought and the conviction that she is watching over them in all dangers, experience her help and are guarded by her as by a motherly presence, not seen but realized most vividly and trusted in most firmly through the assurance of the Catholic Faith, than which there is no stronger motive of certainty in all the world.

The Child from the Mother

The little child, conscious of its earthly mother's love, solicitude and care, learns from her of this

heavenly Mother, unseen but most real, and begins to lisp the accents of those prayers which have been consecrated by ages of devotion. The "Hail Mary," a prayer whose opening sentences were brought from heaven by the Angel of the Annunciation, the "Hail Holy Queen," the "Memorare," rise from its young and unspoiled heart to the heart of Mary, delighting her beyond measure with faith and innocence, and stirring her mother's love to reply in a shower of favors, in a zeal of protection which can match even the dangers and temptations that will haunt the path of this little one in coming days. Early in life, every Catholic child learns with its waking intelligence to hold communion with the Mother in heaven, and this converse becomes a habit, so that the exchange of prayer and praise on the one hand and of love and protection on the other are as usual and obvious as every day.

When the Heart Leaps

The growing child increases insensibly in love for Mary and in every-day converse with her. This devotion sinks its roots spontaneously in souls which for the rest may not be overmuch inclined to pious practices. To a true Catholic, the name of Mary, the mere mention of her, makes the heart leap with a devotion half-chivalrous, half-filial, and while the non-believer may reverence and admire the Mother of God as an historic personage, once glorious upon earth for

virtue and goodness but now departed, the Catholic looks upon her always as a near presence, a reality, a person with whom he can converse at any moment more easily than with those still upon earth, a part of his life more precious and intimate than the conversation of any friend who still walks the earth.

The love which each one has had for an earthly mother doubtless contributes its part to this filial love of Mary, offering a comparison for her goodness and affection in what each one knows of the tenderness of his mother according to the flesh. But when the memory of an earthly mother has become somewhat lessened by the wear of years, the thought of Mary is still as vivid as in youth, the words spoken to her in prayer are as direct and as confident in the man as in the child at his mother's knee. Indeed, the thought of the motherhood of Mary will sometimes bring back to the grown man the memory of his earthly mother, and confident that she is now in the company of the blessed, he will pray to his mother according to nature and beg her to commend him to his Mother according to grace, as she was wont to do during her days on earth.

Healthful and Joyous

As youth broadens into manhood, the Catholic who has been rightly brought up and instructed in faith and practice feels grow within his soul this solid and reasoned devotion to the Mother of the

Most High. Many Catholics are themselves not aware how deep is their love for, how constant their communion with the Mother of God, because it has become an integral part of their life, an accustomed and sometimes scarcely-conscious part of their days to think of her, speak to her, and enjoy her aid and protection. Such a devotion is healthful and joyous for the soul, it is a source of inward confidence, it dispels false fears, it is an antidote for impurity, it keeps the spirit on a sunny, exalted plane of noble thoughts.

The very remembrance of the Honor and Crown of all womanhood makes womanhood itself a thing sacred, a thing to be reverenced. Evil thoughts, low passions, shrink ashamed from the presence of the very thought of Mary. This habitual devotion to her is like an accustomed sunshine which drives away miasmas from the soul; it is like a strong, pure wind, in which the pestilence-bearing insects of evil thoughts and selfish troubles cannot stay to poison the mind.

The Comfort of the Old

In mature life, as in old age, Catholics continue and make more perfect their habit of communing with their Mother in heaven. Did those without the Church realize and appreciate the preciousness and consolation of this mutual relation of trustful and loving child on the one hand and loving and faithful Mother on the other, they would deeply envy those who are of the Faith.

The relation between a son and his earthly mother is beautiful, the most beautiful perhaps of all human relationships. Confidence, love, the exchange of good offices, mutual devotion, here coexist with wonderful unselfishness and purity of affection.

The mother cherishes her child with the most selfless love known to mankind, a love which God Himself has taken to serve as a comparison to express His own love for man. The son loves his mother with the purest affection which man can have for woman. The mother guides and forms her child once again in his spiritual nature as she gave of her substance to nourish his material being. Her influence is set upon him for all time and all eternity. Whatever nobleness or lofty achievement he brings to his name in maturer days is in all likelihood the fruit of some influence, obscure perhaps but as real as life itself, which he had from his mother.

The Mother's Influence

But alas! this relation, lovely in itself and salutary beyond expression, is in its own nature fleeting. There is a period when the influence of the mother is paramount upon her child, and when he takes his form and complexion of mind from her gentle pressure and affectionate guidance. But he soon hardens into the lineaments of manhood, and it is one of the sorrows of life that circumstances soon separate, in spirit, if not in deed, the

son from the mother. He goes out into a world where she cannot follow, he takes up activities and responsibilities which she cannot share. He marries a wife or is wedded to a calling—a wedlock sometimes even more engrossing and exacting than that of matrimony—and is in so far separated from his mother. He loves her still but she no longer molds and protects him. He has gone beyond the sphere in which the mother is the undisputed queen.

Her Unbounded Motherhood

The Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin, her communion with her children, knows, on the contrary, no such limitations of age or time. The man of mature age, absorbed in the grim struggle for success and achievement, if his faith be strong and his soul pure, will turn as confidently to his Mother in heaven, rely as much on her aid, be guided as much by her example and inspirations as when he was a little child at his mother's knee. He is conscious still of her protection. He receives the fruits of her intercession. Indeed the rude experience of life brings home to noble souls with the greater conviction that they are still but children and have even more need of the help of their Mother in heaven than during the protected days of their youth. There is something moving and touching in the childlike love and confidence which grown men show to Mary, which even the innocent trust of white-souled little children cannot equal.

A Shining Instance

There comes to mind in this regard that famous picture of O'Connell, the Irish statesman, in the full turmoil of his battle for his people's cause, going apart from the strenuous and momentous debate of the House of Commons to pace up and down in a corridor and say his beads. "You should be inside, fighting for the cause!" said a friend who found him there thus engaged. "I am doing more for the cause here saying my beads than speaking on the floor of the House of Commons," answered O'Connell; and his reply has deserved to become historic not only for its own nobleness but because it expresses so truly the attitude of devout Catholic men throughout the world, and in all ages of the Church, in regard to the preciousness and effectiveness of communion with their Mother in Heaven.

The Trust of the Old

The old return sometimes to the simplicity of their youthful devotion to the holy Mother of God. When their eyes fail and their thoughts grow dim with years, you may see them telling their rosary over and over, not thinking very profoundly but intent on paying homage to their Mother in heaven like old servitors who cannot do much more than wait at attention and who honor their patrons more by their presence than by their actions. It is a touching sight to see an old man, experienced in affairs it may be and

whose days have passed in weighty employments, now come to a second childhood of weakness and dependence but keeping still to that accustomed communion with the Virgin Mother which is the comfort of his old age as it was the stay and safety of his childhood and his youth. How they plead, these old Catholic men and women, for the aid of that most powerful and most kind of helpers with her Divine Son. Very earnest upon their lips are all the many-times repeated sentences of the Hail Mary, but they say with most fervor of all the closing words, "pray for us sinners * * * at the hour of our death." Their communion with their Mother in heaven is trustful, and habitual. It has become by long usage a part of their lives and their souls.

An Inconceivable Reliance

Even so brief a sketch of the customary devotion practised by Catholics toward the Virgin Mary, with the constant and vital communion with her which it implies, and the constant experience which it gives of her answering care and protection, will bring to Catholics some realization of the actual and effective communication which really exists between this most beloved Woman in heaven and her children on earth. Non-Catholics must find it very hard, if not impossible, to conceive of such a communion. It requires some experience of its nature to understand how great a consolation it becomes in sor-

row, what a stay in trials, and what an assurance and reliance in all the vicissitudes of life.

The Outward Splendors

They can more readily realize the great exterior manifestations of devotion to the Blessed Mother. When they visit Lourdes, they are impressed by the immense processions which wind their starry length across the wide stairs which lead to its portal. They enter Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome and study those sublime chapels where the ingenuity of art has been laid under tribute to express the glories of the life of the Virgin on earth and her triumph in heaven. They see pictured the warriors of Lepanto receiving the blessing of the Pope, and their victorious fleet, sweeping the Turks from the sea by the power of Mary. They climb to the summit of Our Lady of the Garde at Marseilles and read the votive tablets set in the walls to proclaim the miracles wrought by her intercession.

The Interior Confidence

But do they in any way conceive the personal and individual reverence and devotion of which these things are only the exterior and collective expression? Do they guess that childlike love and confidence which Catholics pay to the Mother of God, not as to a memorable personage of history nor as to a glorious abstraction but as to a mother, living and near, who can be appealed to

in any—even the most trivial—sorrow or need, who is interested in the least as in the greatest of her children, who constantly listens in heaven for the slightest whisper of any prayer that may come up to her from the sons and daughters of men? Can they realize that she replies with such tenderness and power, such compassion for the weak, and love for repentant sinners, that she merits the twofold title which is hers alone among all who live on earth or reign in heaven—that of the true Mother of God and Mother of men?

Conjecture and Experience

Catholic devotion to Mary, with the intimate and constant communion which it brings with the most exalted and noble of all mere creatures, is so singular a privilege that it must be experienced to be appreciated—no words are adequate to describe it. Those outside the Church, when they look into the faces of the kneeling pilgrims at Lourdes, when they see their rapt expression of living faith and confidence, as though the pleading soul were shining through its veils of flesh, may guess what childlike love and trust these praying thousands feel toward that living and most beloved Woman who is for them more real, more truly present, more able to hear and help them than the fellow-mortals who throng around. They may guess and conjecture—it is for the devoted sons and daughters of Mary to experience and to realize what it means to live in hourly converse with such a Mother.

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNION WITH THE ANGELS

The teaching of the Church concerning the spirit-world and our communion with spirits has one beautiful chapter which opens up such vistas of exquisite poetry, such reaches of sublime speculation, such abysses of human perfectibility, that the intelligence reels in endeavoring to fathom its contents. It is the chapter which deals with the choirs of the angels. That instinct in man which prompts him to reach out for new spheres of knowledge makes him desire to know as much as possible about the world of spirits, but he finds himself very ill equipped for the exploration of this most exalted region of creation. All human knowledge, in our present state, comes primarily through the senses, and we have no sense to touch the substance of a spirit nor any vision which lets us search the distant reaches of the spirit-world as we can pry far off into the vast distances of the visible heavens.

Reason can tell us of the possibility of a world of angelic beings. The occasional manifestation of preternatural powers, rarely occurring in mortal affairs, may give us some intimation of the

existence of pure spirits, stronger and wiser than man. But reason is baffled by the difficulties of a subject so removed from our experience, and we must have recourse to faith.

Faith's Testimony

It is only faith which can assure us without error of the existence and nature of those spiritual intelligences which we call angels, and can let us know how our own destiny is interwoven with theirs. Relying on the word of God, Who knows all things and can neither deceive nor be deceived, we become certain that there is a whole universe of blessed spirits, friends of God and already intimates of His heavenly court, grouped in nine splendid choirs, whose destined companions we ourselves are, in the never-ending exultation of heaven. We know that some of these glorious angels, called Angel Guardians, are assigned to be the companions of mankind through life, protecting though unseen, and to use their celestial intelligence and their preternatural powers to help, safeguard and guide the man or woman with whom they go from the cradle to the tomb.

The unbeliever, cut off from that certain information about the world of spirits which the Church has received as part of her inheritance of truth, is either indifferent to the existence of this universe of sublimity and loveliness, or else is tempted to pry and explore, in the illicit and

misleading ways of spiritistic evocation, the world of bodiless intelligences.

Sinister Visitors

But even though visitors from another sphere of being do enter the darkened cabinet of the medium and deliver messages through this ambiguous avenue of communication, there is no doubt that the glorious angels of God would never stoop to such sinister traffic. If there is any real communication with spirits in spiritistic seances, then the spirits who give these contradictory messages, who descend to join themselves with such mummery, are spirits of evil, spirits of lying, and from them no reasonable man should hope to learn anything good and profitable for mankind. They are the enemies of humanity from the beginning, and hatred is the motive of all their dealings with the sons of men.

It is true that even the teachings of the Church do not gratify all our inquisitive wish for knowledge about the angels. Where the revealed word of God ends, the labored reasonings of scientific theologians may carry forward the conclusions which our intelligence can draw from the doctrines of the Church. But taking only what we know by revelation about the angels, there is enough to stir the conception to sublime outwanderings, enough to make us exult with consolation and be glad with high-hearted expectation and delight.

The Catholic's Conviction

To the non-Catholic it may seem that this certainty of ours about the angelic universe is not scientific nor well-sustained. This is because he does not consider rightly the grounds upon which it rests. We believe upon the word of God, established by evidence, transmitted to us by a living Church, God's representative upon earth and speaking with His authority. Hence, though we have no sensible intercommunion with the blessed spirits whom we call angels, we are as sure of their existence as though we had held communication with them. Indeed we are more sure, in proportion as our source of information is more sure than experience. Catholics accept the teaching of the Church as the word of God Himself, Who has guaranteed His Church against error when she teaches in His name concerning matters of faith and of morals. Hence they are certain of the existence of the angels as of a fact guaranteed to them by God.

A Comparison

All of us have often become convinced of the reality of human personalities in far less reliable ways. Thus our favorite authors are well known to us, we are sure of their existence, we sympathize with their ideas, which we know as familiarly as though we had spoken to them frequently, we admire perhaps their genius and skill in writing—yet how many of us have had any

direct communication with them? It is through human faith, and by relying on the word of others that we are confident that they exist.

A publisher issues certain volumes, bearing a name. Literary critics take up and censure or praise the work, ascribing it to the same name. The general public discusses the new author, and he takes his place gradually in the circle of recognized and popular writers. We accept the testimony of publishers, critics, public, and take it for granted thenceforth that such and such a person exists and has such and such characteristics.

For much stronger reasons, Catholics are sure of the existence of the world of spirits called angels. Holy Scripture, as interpreted by the Church, the pillar and ground of truth, bears witness to their existence and their nature. Tradition, the living word of Christ's teaching, handed down from mouth to mouth in unbroken succession from the days of the Savior and Teacher of mankind until the present, supplements and expands the teaching of the Scriptures concerning the angels. We know that they differ in attributes and perfections, in characteristics and offices, and that they are therefore divided into nine groups, or "choirs" as they are called, of blessed spirits.

St. Jerome's Teaching

St. Jerome, learned interpreter and translator of the Holy Scriptures, tells us the reason for this

Catholic belief that there are nine orders of the blessed angels. In his thirty-fourth discourse or homily upon the Gospels, he says: "We say that there are nine choirs of Angels because we know by the witness of Holy Scripture that there are Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim. That there are Angels and Archangels nearly every page of Holy Scripture bears witness: the books of the prophets, as is well known, often speak of the Cherubim and the Seraphim; Paul the Apostle also enumerates the names of four choirs in his Epistle to the Ephesians, 'Above every Principality, and Power, and Virtue and Domination.' Again, writing to the Colossians, he says: 'Whether Thrones, or Powers, or Principalities or Dominations.' If then to those four which he mentions in the Epistle to the Ephesians are added the Thrones, we have five choirs: if to these are joined the Angels and Archangels, the Cherubim and Seraphim, without doubt there are found to exist nine choirs of Angels."

What "Angel" Means

The holy Doctor, in the following passages of his homily, gives us some further information concerning the angels. In reading what follows, bear in mind that the word "angel" means "a herald." "We must know," he says, "that the word 'Angels' designates their office, not their nature. For those holy spirits of the heavenly

fatherland are indeed always spirits, but they can by no means always be called angels, for they are then only angels when something is announced through their ministry. Hence it is said through the Psalmist, 'Who makes His spirits angels,' as though he plainly said, 'who makes those whom He always has as spirits, also, when He wishes, angels.'

"Those who announce things of lesser importance," he continues, "are called Angels, those who declare things of great import, Archangels. This is why, to the Blessed Virgin, not any Angel but Gabriel, the Archangel, is sent. It was proper that the highest Angel should go on that embassage which announced the most important of all events. These Archangels are known by words which indicate how great are their powers. For 'Michael' means, 'Who is Like God?' 'Gabriel' signifies, 'The Strength of God,' and 'Raphael' denotes, 'The Healing of God.'"

Our Ministering Spirits

This much then we know concerning these celestial spirits, and in other doctors of the Church we find still further reflections on their nature and attributes and on the use which God makes of them in the work of His Providence over men. To ourselves, perhaps the most consoling and touching of all the ministries of the angels is that whereby some individuals of that glorious hierarchy are delegated by God to act

as guardian spirits of mankind. To every newborn babe who begins his momentous journeying through life towards eternity, God assigns a Guardian Angel, one of the princes of His court of heaven, whose charge it is to watch over and protect this mortal until the time of proving and of merit is over. A very consoling and reassuring knowledge is this! A favorite devotion of Catholics is that to their Guardian Angel.

The Might of Angels

The power of the angels is extremely great by nature, as we have reason to know from human experience of the malice of the wicked angels, fallen from grace and ruined in their powers, but who yet retain so much malevolent influence in the affairs of men. But the power of the guardian spirits who watch over man is immensely increased by their participation in the light of glory, by their close union with the infinite power of God. Their intelligence, prudence and wisdom, their ability to control natural causes, their understanding of the ways of Divine Providence are beyond our conceiving.

Hence to have even the occasional assistance of such a glorious spirit would be an advantage which no one could estimate. Yet each one's Guardian Angel not only comes from time to time from heaven, assisting in some special danger or difficulty, but he is constantly on duty, accompanying his charge through every high road and

by-way of life. Moreover, though these prince-sentinels of our souls are unseen by us, because they are pure spirits and we have no faculties whereby to perceive them, they are yet as real as ourselves, and they can both see and hear us, in ways which our imperfect intelligence cannot know.

Their Attitude Toward Man

The benevolence with which our Guardian Angels regard us is in proportion to their own nobleness and goodness, and to the command which they have received from God to love and cherish us. Besides, we are destined in the plans of God to be their companions and to share in and increase their delight in heaven for all eternity. Can we conjecture, then, with what interest and love they follow our ways, how our virtues please them and our evil actions displease and disappoint them? They wait to help us when we pray to them, they thrill with desire to see us safe beyond the reach of evil, valiant in our striving for holiness, clean of heart, and close to God during our brief days until they can lead our disembodied spirits to their own mansions of everlasting bliss.

The evil spirits hate us because we are made in the image of God and because we are destined to occupy for all ages the thrones which they forfeited when by rebellion against God they fell from heaven to hell. For the same reason the celestial natures of the good angels love us, and their goodness is more powerful to aïd us than is

the malice of the fallen spirits to harm. We are encompassed by their protection, and at any moment we may speak to them without the sound of words, by directing towards them the thoughts and aspirations of our souls. Being pure spirits they can understand our very thought when we wish to communicate with them by movements of our intelligence and our will.

The Help of Guardian Angels

This free and constant communion with his Angelic Guardian, which is possible and easy for the Catholic, is another of those extraordinary means of communication with the spirit-world afforded by the teaching of the Catholic Church. No other religion has anything comparable to offer by way of consolation and assurance, and even those who have not the Catholic faith can see how much more excellent in itself and conformable to the dignity of our human nature is this teaching than the ambiguous tenets of spiritism which offers no assurance of protection or friendship, nor even any guarantee of the character of the spirits which it evokes under such questionable surroundings.

Moreover, if we come to consider the authenticated instances of the intervention of the Guardian Angels in human affairs, they are far more certain, more completely proven and more universally believed than the phenomena of spiritism. Through the whole history of the

Church, the saints, and other holy men and women of unimpeachable veracity and sincerity whose sanity and prudence were attested by all who knew them, have time and again witnessed to the part taken by their Guardian Angels in their lives and those of others.

Their Spiritual Aid

Everyone who is devout towards his Angel Guardian experiences a spiritual aid which is very precious and consoling. From the time when they learned, as little children, to venerate and trust their angelic companion, good Catholics have had the habit of seeking help from their unseen comrade in the difficult passes of life. The customary consciousness that one has at one's side a being unseen and incorporeal but for that very reason freed from all the limitations of matter, and benevolent to a degree beyond all our experience, is an assurance in every danger. Add to this that the Catholic believes that this Angel Guardian is specially commissioned by God to watch over and help him in particular, and even non-believers can guess what a consolation, in the actual rubs and perils of living, is the Catholic belief in this particular.

Faith and Joy

It is true of course of this, as of all the other teachings of the Church, that it brings consolation and joy in proportion to the belief of the

individual. If a Catholic is poorly instructed in the Faith, or if his faith is weak and ineffective, then naturally he loses the comfort which comes from believing strongly and realizing vividly these consoling doctrines. Some Catholics too are unfortunately so ignorant of their religion and care so little to grasp its meaning that they actually leave the definite, authoritative and comforting teaching of their religion to follow after the vagaries of spiritism which is the vaguest and most flimsy substitute for the authentic assurances of the Catholic faith.

The Lure of Curiosity

Of course it is curiosity, the itching to see and hear something from the spirit-world, the hankering after the occult and the mysterious which sometimes leads men and women to stray after mediums and sit in dark chambers waiting for "manifestations." But let anyone compare the one and the other, the Church's teaching, reasonable and pure, dignified and consonant with known truths, consistent and approved by the faith of uncounted millions for nearly two thousand years, and by the experience of untold thousands in the happenings of their daily life, with the shifty and varying doctrines of spiritism, based on necromantic ceremonies, held in obscure haunts, under circumstances which invite delusion, resulting in a jargon and jumble of "communications" without dignity or consistency,

which may, so far as intrinsic evidence goes, be the conscious or unconscious outpouring of the mediocre mentality of mediums or, if there are spirits in the case, the delusive wiles of lying spirits, enemies of mankind, who will not tell anything which makes for happiness, sanity and peace in the souls of their votaries.

Celestial Speculations

What we have said does by no means exhaust the consolations of the truth that there is an universe of blessed angels. The speculation of man is impotent to conceive the content of this part of the Church's teachings as it is of all the rest. The reflection that there are nine choirs of angels, each made up of innumerable blessed spirits, all charming in their individual perfection and each differing from the rest in the special attractions given to him by God, exalts our speculation to the very boundaries of thought in the endeavor to conceive what is the splendor of this uncounted host of spirit friends. Yet all this bright multitude keep their clear gaze upon us constantly, longing for the day when they shall welcome us into heaven and see us the peers of their own exquisite and spotless glory.

We may at any time, when we are alone or surrounded with men, in still night watches or during the dangerous day, speak to any or to the whole assembly of these blessed Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities,

Powers, Virtues, Seraphim and Cherubim, with the assurance that the aspirations of our hearts directed towards them will stir in all that conquering army of the crowned warriors of God an answering love and exultation. We may call at any moment to our aid not only our own Guardian Angel but all the chiefs of the heavenly court, Michael and Gabriel, Raphael and the Captains and cohorts of the militia of heaven.

The Host of Angel Friends

We may expand our hearts and call upon the whole innumerable hosts of Guardian Angels throughout the world, those who watch over individuals and nations, those who guard the tabernacles of Catholic churches, those who keep the holy places of earth, in cities and on country sides, here in the New World and yonder in Europe and on the wastes of Asia and in the swarming populations of crowded continents, yonder where the snows cover the pole and there where through African jungles the missionaries cut their way through the haunts of fever to preach to lost tribes and unknown villages. Everywhere around the earth there are blessed angels. Everywhere we may reach them by the breath of a prayer. Everywhere they love us, and watch over us.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

Something has been already said about the doctrine of the Church concerning the souls in purgatory and the consolation which Catholic teaching gives concerning those whom we have loved on earth and who are now gone onward whither as yet we cannot pass. This subject however deserves some further development, for it opens to view one of the most touching and appealing aspects of the Communion of Saints. In very sharp contrast is this God-given teaching to the theories of life-after-death propounded by spiritistic conjectures. The one is the truth as it is, the other, a chimerical system, built of dreams.

The Fate of Departed Souls

The divine truth concerning departed souls is this: That while at death the body returns to the earth from which it sprang, the immortal soul, freed of its substantial union with matter, goes forth into the hands of God. If it be in God's friendship, and clean from all sins and from the remains of sin, then it is received into heaven, there to await the Judgment Day which will re-

unite it to its body, then risen and glorified and possessed of qualities which make it a fit consort for the blissful soul forever. On the other hand, if the soul of its own free will has been so unhappy and so wicked as to persist until death in the state of mortal sin, which is wilful enmity with God, it has rendered itself unfit for any place in creation save the refuse-heap of hell, and thither it goes forever.

The Reason For Purgatory

But the greater majority even of the friends of God, as we may well suppose from what we know of human nature, pass from this world not clean and free from all stain and fit for heaven but rather with some soil of earth still upon them, some lesser sins unrepented, some punishment yet unatoned for and still to be suffered for the sins committed during life. Whither then are these souls to go? Not directly to heaven, for nothing in the least degree defiled shall enter there, not to everlasting punishment, for these souls are friends of God and have merited eternal life. Thus reason itself could inform us what faith clearly teaches that there is a place or state called purgatory where the souls of the just abide until the stains which make them unfit for heaven are purged away.

God has told us, through His Church, very little indeed about purgatory. We know that it exists, and that it is a place or state of cleansing.

We know besides that our prayers and good works, the indulgences we gain and the penances we perform for them are efficacious to help the souls in purgatory and to obtain the shortening of their exile and the relief of their sufferings. But how long any individual soul may have to stay there, or how much relief is secured by our gaining of indulgences or performance of penance for the suffering souls, we cannot tell, but must leave to the mercy of God.

The Measure of Atoning

It is no wonder that these things are obscure to us, for what measure have we to estimate the atoning power of our actions? It is enough for us to be sure that what we do for the poor souls is a help and a consolation to them. Neither can we expect to be able to estimate the precise efficacy of indulgences. An indulgence is a special remission of the punishment due to sins which have themselves been repented of and forgiven, which the Church bestows from the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints, over which she has been given control by God.

In ancient days it was the custom to impose what were called canonical penances, and to oblige the penitent to perform months and sometimes years of penitential works. In abolishing these long penances the Church, like a good mother, imparted their penitential efficacy to much easier actions. So in giving an indulgence of, say three

years, for the recitation of a short prayer, she imparts to that prayer the efficacy, whatever that may have been, which she gave to the canonical penance of three years in that olden day.

The Things Which Matter

But after all, it matters little that we are ignorant of so many details about purgatory. They are God's secrets now, but we shall be told them hereafter. What does matter very much is, that we know the essential things—the existence of this place of purification, the probability that many, many of our own friends are there and need our prayers, and the efficacy of our supplications, our penances, our indulgenced aspirations to help and deliver them. It is a wonderful thing that when the body lies in the tomb, when the incorporeal spirit has gone out beyond our ken, our feeble voices can still follow the departed souls, our good works can console them, the penances we perform are accepted by God in satisfaction for the pain they would otherwise have to pay to the infinite Justice, in purgatory.

The Pity of It!

Since reason so clearly points to the existence of purgatory, it is a tragedy that so few persons outside the Church pay heed to their reason and conclude the efficacy of prayers for the dead. It is tragic for the bereaved, who find themselves suddenly separated from the one they love, in

presence only of a lifeless body, or, later, of a poignant and haunting memory, and who do not know how to relieve the swelling of their grief by prayer for their dead. In truth the separation is only in seeming, the veil which parts them from their friends who died in the friendship of God is only a barrier to the eyes and the ears, not to the prayerful aspirations of the heart. An instinct of love makes them desire to help the dear friend or relation who has departed. But they remain silent, while they might so easily, by prayer, reach forth past the barriers of death and bring healing and consolation to the suffering soul whom they love.

The Longing of the Souls

It is still more a tragedy for the departed soul, which is torn from the familiar world it knew and sinks into its place of pain by the sad gravitation by which a just spirit that is stained must seek its purification. Friendships, affections, the fond ties of earth are not broken by death. In its lonely yearning to be clean and to enter heaven, the soul in purgatory must often and again cast longing glances toward earth, where those whom it has left behind are able to do so much to relieve and shorten its sufferings. But no succor comes. Where a whispered prayer would be of more avail than all the mourning speeches ever uttered, no prayers are said for the departed soul. Where a slight penance would be of great efficacy, no

penance is offered up to appease the justice of God. Where indulgences would be more welcome than showers of refreshing rain to desert flowers, no indulgences are sought for in behalf of the soul whose friends do not believe in the efficacy of intercession for the dead. Of all the sorry mischief wrought by those thieves who stole the fullness of the Faith from so great a part of Christendom, one of the meanest turns was that by which they cheated so many millions of the dead of prayers.

The Logic of the Great War

It is true that the terrible logic of the Great War brought conviction to many minds concerning the efficacy of prayer for the departed. Once, in a little town in England, while walking about and waiting for a train, the author saw a crucifix set up outside a Protestant Church. Under the touching symbol of our redemption was an inscription, evidently put there since the Great War had begun, which exhorted all who passed that way to offer up a prayer for those who had perished in the agony of that long struggle. It was a touching evidence that hearts bereaved of so many of their friends and neighbors could no longer endure to doubt the efficacy of prayer for the dead.

The Means of Succor

The Catholic Church, besides giving this assurance of the power of the living to help the

dead, offers, as we have remarked, from the treasures entrusted to her by Christ, the most extraordinary means of succoring the poor souls in purgatory, and hastening their entrance into heaven. Foremost among these is, of course, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is in fact the bloodless repetition of the Sacrifice of Calvary, and has therefore a power and efficacy to move the mercy of God upon both the dead and the living which is incomparably beyond every other prayer or method of supplication. Further to assist the poor souls, and to console their friends and relatives on earth, the Church has provided a Mass for the dead, celebrated in black vestments, where all the special prayers, the Introit, the Offertory, even the Preface are pleas for mercy on the departed soul, loving pleadings with God to hasten its deliverance from purgatory and speed its joyful entrance into heaven.

The Power of the Mass

To be able to offer up once more to God, by a real, though unbloody, repetition of the tremendous sacrifice of Calvary, the very Body and Blood of His Divine Son, immolated once more to free the poor souls from purgatory, is a privilege of Catholics which they do not sufficiently appreciate. How utterly it eclipses in sublime efficacy all the pathetic measures whereby those outside the Church console their yearning towards their departed friends! They offer heaped-up

gifts of flowers, or build marble monuments in deserted graveyards where men will seldom read the inscription on the stone. What does this profit the poor soul? One holy Mass, pouring upon the suffering spirit the balm of God's mercy, won by the merits of His beloved Son, is worth all the blossoms that ever faded above a tomb and all the most precious marbles that ever crumbled in the cemeteries of all the earth. Yet strange to say even good Catholics sometimes forget this efficacy of the Mass and spend in flowers and in monuments what the soul of their departed friend longs to have applied for masses for the dead. The holy Council of Trent assures us that we can help the poor souls "Especially by the most acceptable Sacrifice of the Mass."

Other Helps For Souls Departed

Besides the Mass, the Church gives to her children many other ways of aiding the dead. She teaches that the reception of Holy Communion and the offering of this sublime sacrament for the faithful departed is a most efficacious means to assuage their suffering. She has attached indulgences, or the efficacy of the canonical penances of old days, to many beautiful prayers, and has made these indulgences applicable in many instances to the souls of the faithful departed. She constantly encourages her children to pray for the souls in purgatory, she permits the celebration of masses for the dead often throughout the year,

and on November 2nd, a day when she specially commemorates the poor souls in purgatory, she allows her priests to say not only one but three masses on the same morning, so as to pour out abundantly, on these agonized and expectant friends of God, the mighty alleviation of the supreme Sacrifice.

Contrast this continual solicitude of the Church and of devout Catholics for the souls departed with the attitude of those who are without the fold. What do these latter do for those who were so dear to them during life, and who now need their kind offices far more than they did on earth? Is it not pitiful that for want of belief in the existence of purgatory and of knowledge of the efficacy of prayer to relieve the suffering souls, so many well-meaning folk leave their friends to fast in fires when they themselves might so readily assist them?

Childish Dreams

The pity deepens, when we learn of the childish dreams of the next world which some spiritists proclaim as the result of "messages" from the hereafter. According to them there is no purgatory, but the disembodied soul enters into cycles of development and goes from one sphere to another until at last it reaches—what? Some of the dreams of these "psychic investigators" depict a world where material conditions are reproduced like those of earth, where in shadowy fashion the

life of earth goes on under new conditions. The whole affair is terribly trivial, unseemly, unbecoming the dignity of human nature. Contrast the truth of God as it is taught by the Church concerning the life after death, with the shivery and sordid existence which spiritistic dreams have conjured up out of the disjointed "revelations" of seances and mediums.

Prayer to the Holy Souls

There is another aspect of Catholic communion with the souls of the departed similarly consoling, and which is in accord with reason—the power of these suffering souls to hear our prayers, and to help us by their own petitions to God from the depth of their prison of love and justice. Many good Catholics frequently pray to the holy souls in purgatory with great confidence and affection, and they piously believe that their prayers are heard. Indeed the answers which they receive and the favors which they obtain from this devotion encourage them to its practice. This is not indeed a doctrine of the Church, but a devout belief of many Catholics.

The situation of the souls in purgatory is singular. They are, it is true, the prisoners of God's justice, and are held to atone for the remains of their sins not expiated during life. But they are also the friends of God for all eternity. They possess sanctifying grace, the celestial wedding garment which will gain them entrance to

the banquet of never-ending delight prepared by God for all who love Him. For them, the dangers and vicissitudes of life are over, and they no longer can sin or merit. Yet their prayers may have a singular efficacy with the Most High. It is thus a common practice of Catholics to appeal to God through the holy souls, hoping that they are able to intercede for us with intense earnestness, and that their supplications are acceptable to God, availing to move His Divine Majesty.

The Sympathy of Souls Departed

The poor souls must have, besides, a great sympathy with us in our necessities and dangers. They are themselves but just come from the warfare of life and they know by recent experience its temptations and perils. In the long hours of their own reflections on the days they have spent on earth, they must wish to help those whom they left behind to escape the snares which beset themselves, to avoid the errors by which they have condemned themselves to the slow and weary expiation of purgatory. If, as we have often conjectured, a great part of the pain of purgatory consists in the keen regret for opportunities wasted, for gifts of God misused, for chances of merit thrown away, then the charity of the poor souls must make them wish to help their friends on earth to avoid that misuse of opportunities which now makes them suffer, to escape the future regrets which will come from

overlooking chances of merit now so easy and so near.

Thus the poor souls must be most ready to assist us, they must take a great interest in our welfare. Particularly when we have, by our efforts, by masses and communions, by penances and prayers offered up for their relief, brought consolation to their sufferings, they must wish to help us in turn by their own efficacious prayers. So that we can appeal to them with confidence, remembering how free they are to pray for us, how interested they are in our well-being, how effective may be their petitions when they cry to God for those whom they left on earth.

The Number in Purgatory

We can only guess as to what is the number of holy souls who are to be found at any instant in purgatory. Indeed, as to the precise number of them we can hardly even guess. But when we consider that there are at this time on earth nearly fifteen hundred million souls, and that therefore, according to the average of deaths, souls are leaving this world at more than the rate of one a second, we can fancy what multitudes must constantly be waiting in purgatory, because, what with the weakness of our human nature and the stainless sanctity of God, we can hardly expect that very many of these souls go straight to heaven without spending at least some time in the cleansing fires of purgatory. Yet it would not

be kind to think that too many of these vast multitudes that go daily into eternity die without the friendship of God. So that there must be at any moment immense throngs of souls awaiting their deliverance from that place of temporary expiation.

It is easier for us to speak to the holy souls than it is to converse with our friends on earth. If we direct towards them the thoughts of our heart, we may hope that God, in His goodness, will make manifest to them what we wish to ask them or to tell them. The Catholic, accustomed to the constant communion with the other world, finds it easy and natural to speak to the holy souls, as to the saints in heaven.

Converse With the Other World

Converts to the Church are sometimes surprised at this familiar interchange between the living and the dead. "When I first became a Catholic," said one of them, "one of my greatest difficulties was, when I knelt down to say prayers to the saints or the holy souls, to realize that anyone was listening to me!" But in proportion as faith becomes more assured and habitual, this converse with the other world grows as usual as that with our fellow mortals here on earth, we speak to the one and the other with like facility and are as sure of being heard by the angels and saints in heaven as by our mortal friends.

It is true that some of the consolations of

which we have been speaking in these chapters are shared by certain persons even outside the body of the Catholic Church who still retain many of her beliefs and much of the revealed truth of which she is the custodian. Thus nowadays some non-Catholics believe in prayers for the dead, accept the doctrine of purgatory, have recourse also to the intercession of the saints in heaven. But even these, though they are in so far more fortunate than the rest of non-Catholics, miss very much of the consolation and opportunity of helping their friends who have left this world which they would have did they belong to the great body of faithful Catholics.

Death Not a Separation

For the Catholic the departure of a dear friend from this world is not a complete separation. He knows that though he lacks the sight and hearing to reach to the other world, it is still very near him and he can easily call thither with the aspirations of his soul, and receive an answer in the quiet fruits of intercession which he will receive from his vanished friend who died in the peace of God. For the non-Catholic, on the other hand, how utter is the parting! If he does not believe in prayer for the dead, he has no means of helping the departed soul. To take refuge in the delusions of spiritism and seek contact with the dead by means of mediums and table-turnings, is to court deception. The true guide and assur-

ance in communing with the dead is to be found in the Catholic Church alone.

It is faith which offers this assurance, faith which is a gift of God and therefore not given for man's deserts, but for which, at the same time, the soul can dispose itself by prayer and right-living, and which it can lose by sin and neglect, and especially by trifling with the truth and following false teachings, like those of the spiritism of to-day. It is a sad spectacle, a dreadful reversal of the right order of things, to see some Catholics, never well-instructed in their Faith, who doubtless have never understood nor appreciated the deep beauty and consolation of the Catholic teaching concerning communion with the dead, turn aside to spiritism and offer themselves to be deluded by charlatans, and at worst, if the findings of some investigators are correct, to be the sport of demons.

Our Sad Indifference

The goodness of God not only surpasses our understanding, it also seems to stun our appreciation. With heaven ready to aid us and to be swayed by our least whisper of prayer, we sometimes neglect for many hours to profit by that most serene and beneficent communion. With the bright armies of the angels and the saints looking intently upon us, inclined to hear us, we too often neglect to ask for their ready pleading with God. While unnumbered holy souls look towards us

out of the misty airs of purgatory we disregard them and their great need and their power with the Most High. The adepts of spiritism go to great pains to seek communion with the dead in stuffy cabinets and sometimes wreck both health and sanity in their delusion. For us, all the glorious and various spirit-world lies open to the gentle pleading of a prayer.

CHAPTER IX

COMMUNION WITH THE WORD MADE FLESH IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST

There is One, Who once lived on this earth, Who shared our human joys and sorrows and made Himself, as St. Paul says, like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, with Whom all Christians worthy of the name, long to commune most intimately and most often. Lord of the world of Spirits, Creator of that empire to us unseen as He is of this visible world, it is the supreme dignity of our human nature that the eternal Son of God has come upon earth and become our Brother, taking our flesh from the most pure Virgin Mary, and making us thus blood-brothers with the Eternal. The closer we can come to this loving Savior, the nearer and more intimate our friendship with Him, the more blessed we deem ourselves, here and hereafter. No other communion with the departed can compare with communion with the Son of God made Man.

Christ's Too-Brief Sojourn

So far as His visible presence is concerned, Christ stayed with us but a little time, and mani-

fested Himself only to a small corner of the earth. It was not His purpose nor was it the will of His heavenly Father that He should commune in His mortal flesh with more than a very few of the swarming millions of mankind whom He came to save and to sanctify. He gathered about Him a few disciples, chose twelve messengers, or apostles, taught them the truths which He wished them to preach to the entire world, and then delivered Himself up to His executioners, who, unknown to themselves, carried out upon Him the precise sentence which He had decreed to suffer for our redemption and for the satisfying of His own great love. Then, after His glorious resurrection, He was removed from the eyes of men until the Judgment Day.

Communion Through Prayer

Yet His "delight is to be with the children of men." How shall we reconcile this saying of the All-Truthful, with the circumstance that He seems to have wished to abide with us so short a time, and to leave us so long without the comfort of His presence? True, we can pray to Him, can thus communicate to Him our needs and wishes, confident that He will hear us, and, in spite of the miserable havoc made by rationalism and infidelity with the faith of non-Catholics, there are a great number of men and women outside the Catholic Church who do thus commune with Christ. They do not believe in the Com-

munion of Saints. They do not believe in praying for the dead nor to the saints in heaven. They quite miss the consolation and delight of practising devotion to the Holy Mother of God. But with Christ they commune in prayer.

An Expectation From Omnipotence

Still, considering the immense love which the Redeemer has for those men and women for whom He gave His life and His Blood, one would expect His all-Wisdom to devise some closer means of communion even than prayer. We should expect that He, Whose public life was spent in working wonders, Who showed so often His complete dominion over death and time, would have exerted His omnipotence to bridge over the separation between Himself and His followers and friends upon earth, would have invented, so to speak, some special means of communion at once to satisfy His own exceeding love and to supply our great need of being near to Him Who is our Way and our Truth and our Life.

Is Christ Gone Away?

Outside the Catholic Church if we except some of the Oriental schismatic Churches, no such special means of communing with Christ in very person and deed exists. For those who do not believe these doctrines of that great visible society which Christ left on earth to carry on His

work of saving and sanctifying souls, Christ is gone utterly from this world in bodily presence. They can cry out to Him, as they can to His Father and the Holy Spirit, but they are left to wonder, if they think justly on the matter, that His adorable Body, His human Soul, both united substantially with the Divinity, were left so short a time among men and had contact in their mortal state with so few of the race of Adam, and have then been withdrawn to heaven forever.

An Incalculable Privation

This is one of the greatest privations which the unhappy revolt called the Reformation has brought on a large portion of Christendom. Could those sincere and Christ-loving souls who are still outside the Catholic Church adequately realize the privation which their unbelief in the Holy Eucharist has entailed upon them, they would be stimulated irresistibly to inquire, to pray, to seek for faith in the Catholic doctrine and for unity with the Catholic communion so as to enjoy, with other blessings, this immense and incalculable privilege of the closest communion with Christ, which Omnipotence Itself has prepared for them.

Catholics who have grown up in the Faith, and whose belief in the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is part of their lives, do not realize so keenly sometimes as converts do, the singular privilege and consolation

which this belief brings to them. They experience the solace of Holy Communion but do not appreciate it. Were this resource taken out of their heart, they would then begin to prize it more. Custom has made them less sensitive than is the newcomer into the fold of the greatness of their privilege.

The Exultation of Converts

But the man or woman who enters the Church from one of the denominations which parted from the doctrine of the Real Presence when they separated from Catholic unity, is in a position to value the privilege of Holy Communion. Such a one may have prayed fervently for years. He may have read until he knows by heart the touching passages of the Gospels which reveal the love of Christ for mankind. Perhaps long reflection upon the character of Christ and the content of His teachings may have made him familiar with the Savior as with a well-loved Friend. But all this pales into insignificance when compared with the privilege of Holy Communion—of receiving into one's body the Body and Blood of Jesus, of being fed upon that Bread from Heaven which is the living and glorified Body of Christ, being nourished with the Wheat of the Elect and the Vine which maketh Virgins.

The Unadulterated Truth

The Catholic Church takes literally the words of the Gospel—which would indeed be wild and

extravagant were they not the words of a Man Who was also the Son of God. While the interpreters of the Sacred Scripture who are not Catholics are put to extremes of subterfuge, and to far-fetched explanations to escape the literal sense of Christ's repeated teachings, the Catholic has no such difficulty. Since the God-Man, Whose words had power to work any possible wonder, said, taking bread, "This is My Body," and of the wine, "This is My Blood," and since He bade His disciples "Do this for a commemoration of Me," the Church quite simply takes Him at His word. She cannot err, for He has also declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Her ministers, duly ordained and by the rightful successors of the Apostles to whom Christ entrusted this astounding power, continue, every day, that august Sacrifice which brings to earth once more the heavenly Manna of the New Testament. They prepare on the Christian altar the love-feast in which the faithful once more are nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ. Catholics approach the Communion table with the calm and unwavering conviction that they are there to receive the real Body and real Blood of Christ under the appearance of bread.

Faith and Experience

Faith, if only it be strong enough, well enough grounded, becomes as powerful a motive of certainty as experience. There are many facts of

which we are entirely convinced, and which we have yet never verified by experience. The assurance we have received of them from the testimony of others may be a more compelling motive of assent than mere personal experience.

If we ourselves have seen an object or witnessed an event, we may waver somewhat in our sureness because our memories are falliable, our senses sometimes deceive us, we, personally, have been wrong before and we may be wrong again. But when a number of others in whom we have great trust assure us of a fact from their own knowledge, then we are more sure than if we had ourselves observed it. And when the infinite God guarantees a truth to us, we are more sure of it than if we ourselves and all the human race besides had attested it. Nothing is so certain as the testimony of God. Now, the Catholic Church speaks in the name of God, and with His authority, in matters of faith.

An Untroubled Certainty

Hence the Catholic is sure with an unwavering assurance that in the consecrated Host is present the living Humanity and Divinity of Christ. He kneels before the altar and prays to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament with as firm a confidence in His presence as though He were visible to bodily eyes. He kneels at the communion railing and receives the Host from the hands of the priest with an entire conviction that here is not bread

but only the appearance of bread, and that beneath the accidents of bodily food is the Substance of the Word made Flesh. Difficulties may come to his mind concerning the manner in which Christ is truly present. The wonder of the words of Christ may astonish his spirit when he ponders upon them. He may be, and in fact he is, unable to comprehend how God's all-power accomplishes this astounding thing, that beneath the smallest fragment of the consecrated Host Christ is present, entire and living. No one can understand this marvel which requires omnipotence to achieve it as it needed omniscience to conceive it. But the inability to understand is no obstacle to faith when we believe on the word of God.

Most Intimate and Wonderful

It would be hard to conjecture any means of communion with Christ more intimate and more wonderful than this, that at the words said by the priest in His name, "This is My Body, this My Blood," He should come to be truly though invisibly present under the form of common food and drink—of bread and wine which signify that this Body and Blood of the Savior are to be the daily nourishment of souls. One must be initiate —to use the ancient word of the first Christians— into the Mystery of Love to appreciate the consolation and peace which wait for the Christian soul in the communion of the Sacrament of the Altar. How can those who have this experience

express to others the sentiments of their hearts? "Jesu, dulcis memoria" sings the Eucharistic hymn of the Church:

"Jesu dulcis memoria,
Dans vera cordis gaudia,
Sed super mel et omnia
Ejus dulcis praesentia!"

["Jesus, the very thought of Thee
Doth stir my heart to ecstasy,
But sweeter than all things that be
Thy most dear Presence is to me!"]

The Heart of Catholic Life

The whole life of the Catholic Church and the interior life of individual Catholics turns about this adorable Presence of Incarnate Love, once crucified for mankind and now become their daily spiritual food, and about the sublime Sacrifice, during which the marvel of Christ's Presence on the altar is consummated. The traveler in Europe wonders at those immense Cathedrals which rise up so surprisingly from a huddle of small houses, seeming the work not of human hands but of unearthly powers who have combined astonishing bulk and age-defying strength with such variegated loveliness of sculpture and architecture. Yet these vast and time-resisting masterpieces are in fact the work of simple men, and of men who long antedated our own mechanical knowledge and skill and control over the forces of nature. But they built the cathedrals as shrines for the Blessed Sacrament, huge, im-

perishable monstrances in stone, which should in some way be worthy of the abiding mystery of Christ's Presence. Their enthusiasm and faith raised them to superhuman powers of conception and execution so that their Eucharistic shrines remain the wonder of following generations.

The Meaning of Churches

Every Catholic church is similarly, in its own degree, an expression of Catholic faith in and delight in the Real Presence. The writer was once descending the St. Lawrence in the course of a journey in Canada, and met on the way a young man, a non-Catholic of some wealth, who was on his travels about the world. The latter observed with surprise the succession of large churches which dot the banks of the river at a distance of a few miles apart all down its course from Quebec to Montreal. Finally he came up and said: "Can you tell me the reason of all these imposing churches? It amazes me. How do the inhabitants of these little towns, which look so poor and where the people's houses are so insignificant, contrive to build such large churches, and why do they want to do it?"

The Reason for Splendor

"These churches," we replied, "are the chief delight and consolation of these French Canadian Catholics; they go there to pray to the Blessed Sacrament and to attend Mass and benediction as

other folk go to places of amusement or pleasure. In each of these churches Christ abides in Real Presence for them—this is why they feel repaid for any sacrifices they must make to build such large churches and to maintain them." So, in every convent and religious institution, though the rest of the house is poor and bears the evidence of sacrifice and economy, the chapel is always decorated and furnished with as much elegance and splendor as means will allow, out of reverence for the unseen Guest Who abides there and for Whom all the array of heaven and earth would be less than worthy.

The Crowds at Mass

It must often be a subject of surprise to non-Catholics to see the throngs that gather at Catholic churches not only at Mass on Sunday but for benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the evening, and even for the week-day Mass and communion in parishes where the practice of frequent communion has been specially encouraged by the pastors. Compared with the meagre group who foregather in some non-Catholic places of worship, despite the special inducement held out to new-comers, this attendance of Catholics is a striking phenomenon. It is due to the belief in the Real Presence of Christ on Catholic altars and to the conviction of the efficacy of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. True, the Church commands her members under pain of a mortal of-

fense against God, to go to Mass every Sunday. She does this in consideration of the dignity and importance of the Holy Sacrifice. But the zeal of Catholics to go to Mass and communion even on week-days is in direct proportion to their knowledge of their faith and their devotion to the Mystery of the Altar. Thus the whole scheme of Catholic worship, obligatory and voluntary, springs from a desire for closer and closer communion with Christ through the amazing means which He has left to His Church—the Sacrifice of the Mass wherein He becomes truly present beneath the forms of bread and wine, and Holy Communion wherein He is truly and really received, to nourish the soul of the receiver.

Silent Worshipers

Throughout the world, wherever there are fervent members of the Catholic communion, you may see silent worshipers kneeling at all hours of the day before the altar, communing in silence with Christ, there truly present though invisible, as He is visibly present in heaven. In the city of Rome there are more than six hundred churches—one finds them everywhere. In the old quarters of the city, especially where the population swarms, there are churches on every hand. Merely to visit each one on a single street, like the Corso, which runs from the Piazza del Populo to the monument of Victor Emmanuel, would need much time and perseverence. Yet

you may enter any one of these churches at any hour of the working day and find some silent worshipers of the Blessed Sacrament, praying as though to pour out their hearts before the tabernacle. Multiply these silent forms by the number of churches in the Eternal City, again, multiply these by the hours of the day, and you will gain some notion of how many Catholics there pay daily a visit to the Prisoner of the Altar.

In many another city, in highways and byways, within doors past which sweep the full rush and clamor of human life and trade and pleasure, and in lonely country places, day after day the still forms of men and women at prayer may be found before the altar where is kept the Blessed Sacrament. Other Christian denominations hold occasional services where the memory of Christ is recalled and His teachings proclaimed as each preacher conceives them from the Gospel as preserved in the writings of His Evangelists. Even the truth of these inspired words, kept by the Mother Church through so many centuries, is now denied by some men who, with effrontery, still call themselves Christians.

The Source of Strength

But in the Catholic Church, day by day and hour by hour, through calm and storm, when religion prospers or when persecution threatens and falls, there is maintained by the Church and by her individual children this extraordinary, habit-

ual, intimate and marvelous communion with Christ, which is the source of that persevering strength which surprises her enemies, and of the sanctity and charity which please her friends. Keeping close to Christ in daily communion with His glorified Humanity in the Blessed Sacrament, she indeed shares in the hatred of His enemies but she partakes as well in that serene, interior strength which made Him triumph over death and hell and in the holiness which won for Him so glorious a resurrection.

An Omnipotent Friend

In the religious experience of the individual Catholic, who is well instructed in his Faith, and strong in the beliefs which it gives to him, the Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and the constant and intimate converse which that Presence makes easy, play a part that can scarcely be described to or apprehended by those outside the Church, however intelligent and sympathetic they may be. We have recalled in another place the saying of a French agnostic about the Christian faith, "O blessed faith, which fills the universe with an omnipotent Friend!" The Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence fills the world with churches which are not merely meeting-places or preaching places but which are the presence chambers of the Sacred Humanity and the banqueting rooms of the Eucharistic Supper—spots where Christ comes closer to the hearts of His

followers than we should have thought possible, short of heaven.

For All Mankind

It is a calamity to the human race not measurable in terms of any other loss or privation that so great a part of the human family, so many even of those who bear the name "Christian," are deprived of these singular means of coming most close to Christ, the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament. It was His benign wish and intention, dependent however on the free acceptance of man, that this stupendous Gift of His Body and Blood, of the renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary, should be shared by all mankind without distinction or exception.

In the Old Law there was one chosen people who were to keep the promises. Under the New Dispensation Christ's gifts were to be alike for Jew and Gentile, and His solemn words, "This is My Body, this is My Blood," were addressed to all the world. It is sweet indeed for those of the faith to partake in Holy Communion and to know that Christ, with unimaginable love, rests on their lips and is received to be the nourishment of their souls in some mysterious way, possible only to His omnipotence and generosity. But if they have the charity of Christ it must be that they desire earnestly to share with all others this endlessly precious communion with Him, and to bring all the world to eat worthily of His living

Body and thus be more and more united to Him. To be more and more at one with Christ is the supreme good of our human nature and its most exalted honor and joy. The efficacious means of this union He has left us in the Holy Mass and the Blessed Sacrament.

CHAPTER X

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN THE OTHER SACRAMENTS

It is the teaching of the Catholic Church that Christ established certain outward signs of inward grace to which even in the early ages of the Church, the name "sacrament" was applied. She counts seven of these singular favors of God, to-wit: Baptism, by which the baptized become children of God and heirs of Heaven, receiving, through the merits of Christ, the inward gift of sanctifying grace; Confirmation, by which they are strengthened to become valiant soldiers of Christ; the Holy Eucharist, which, as we have told, feeds their souls with the Body and Blood of Christ; Penance, whereby they are cleansed from their sins; Extreme Unction, which purifies and fortifies the soul at the approach of death and sometimes even restores the bodily health; Matrimony, which is the contract of man and wife raised to the dignity of a sacrament; and Holy Orders, in which the bishop ordains priests and other clerics for the service of the altar.

Contact With Christ

All Catholics know of the existence of these sacraments, and some they have often received.

But many of the faithful themselves have not realized and few of those outside the Church are aware what an intimate contact these sacraments bring with the very Humanity of Christ Himself, or how effective a communion they establish between the soul and its Savior. As we have dwelt already on the efficacy of the Holy Eucharist to bring the soul to communion with the God-Man, let us now say somewhat about the other sacraments and their effect in bringing the soul into touch with Him Who of all the spiritual world is the Head and Chief, the most to be loved and to be desired.

An Arresting Claim

In fact, according to the teaching of the Church, of all those who have passed from earth and gone into the world of spirits, it is with Christ that we can most directly come into contact and it is He Who, so to say, touches us most nearly and most truly for our own healing. This is what we should expect, considering His love and His power. But other Christian denominations have never pretended to be able to offer any such communion. As for the dabblers in spiritism and psychic research, they have, so far as I know, never advanced any claim to be able to put their followers in touch with the adorable Humanity of the God-Man, and such a claim, were it made, would cause a shudder of disgust in those who know under what circumstances and with what apparatus of mystery their séances are carried on.

The fact that so grave and ancient an institution as the Catholic Church has, during all her history, made such a claim, and announced to the world that Christ has confided to her these means of intimate and personal communion and contact with His Sacred Humanity should give matter for thought to those outside her fold and make them reflect how great a benefit they are deprived of if the claims of the Church are justified.

Three hundred millions of her children, in every land, of every race, of every degree of education, unite in believing the efficacy of the sacraments and look on their faith as a reasonable faith, completely in accord with common sense and grounded on the most unanswerable arguments. Beyond question, then, if those outside the Church were effectively brought to consider the same evidence and could learn the grounds on which the Catholic faith is founded, many of them too would believe.

The Gift-Which-Makes-Holy

The Catholic doctrine concerning the sanctifying of the individual is as follows. At Baptism, the Christian receives a certain splendid quality of the soul called "Sanctifying Grace," words which mean, "The-gift-of-God-which-makes-holy." It is the nature of this quality to raise the soul above its natural state and to make it a child of God and an heir of heaven. This sublime gift, given freely in Baptism through the merits of Christ, is increased in two manners, by

performing good actions which are supernaturally meritorious, and by receiving the sacraments. Every good work which is meritorious for heaven brings an increase of grace, but in the reception of the sacraments there is a largess of grace from the bounty of God, because the sacraments are the moral actions of Christ Himself.

His Very Actions

It is this last truth, come down in the constant teaching of the living Church from Christ, which opens up to us such vistas of possible contact with the glorified Humanity of the Savior. In the sacraments we have not merely sacred symbols, not only extraordinary means of grace, not only outward signs of inward sanctification, but the Church, who is their custodian, teaches us that these symbols, these signs of grace, derive their efficacy to accomplish what they signify from the fact that they are morally the actions of Christ Himself, performed indeed through the agency of the priest as minister of His will but ascribed by the heavenly Father not to the weak minister but to His incarnate Son Himself.

Washing and Cleansing

Hence, in the administration of the sacrament of Baptism, it is Christ Himself, acting through His priest, who pours the water and pronounces the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

The minister of Baptism performs these actions, not for himself but as a legate, an ambassador of Christ. So too when the priest, having heard the confession of the penitent, judging that he is truly sorry for his sins and really resolved to commit them no more, pronounces the words of absolution, "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," he utters these words, not for himself but for Him Who said: "all power is given to Me in heaven and upon earth, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained."[1] The penitent is brought into personal contact with the forgiving power of the Son of Man. He is as truly pardoned by Christ Himself as was that woman of the Gospel to whom He said, "thy sins are forgiven thee, go and sin no more."[2]

Christ's Accolade

So likewise, in Confirmation, when the bishop signs the forehead of the one to be confirmed with the holy chrism, saying: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," he similarly speaks not for himself but for Christ. It is Christ's action through the hand of His minister, and the Father in heaven, looking upon this sacrament, sees therein the deed of His beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased, and in consideration of His

merits pours into the soul a largess of sacramental grace.

The Savior's Anointing

So likewise in administering the sacrament of Extreme Unction, when the priest anoints the dying or those in danger of death with the holy oils, blessed for the aid of the sick, and repeats the words enjoined by Christ, it is Christ Who speaks, and the Eternal Father hears the voice of Christ, lifted in pleading for His afflicted follower.

In Holy Orders it is Christ Who lays His hands on the head of the priest-to-be and gives him the sublime powers of the priesthood; and so too of the Ordination of deacon and subdeacon.

The sacraments are, so to speak, the prayers of Christ for His people, expressed through a sign which accomplishes what it signifies, and which is an outward sign of inward grace. The close contact with the living Christ which these sacraments imply is a communion more dear and intimate than the unaided mind would ever have dared to conceive. Had not Eternal Truth taught us these things by the voice of the living Church, no created intelligence would have been capable of conjecturing such wonders.

His Living Presence

To the eye of the Catholic, then, who is, let us repeat, well instructed in his Faith and realizes

the meaning of its teachings, Christ is still present in the world and works therein with an immediate and real presence, a constant power, an intimate and everyday contact with the souls of men, beside which the communion with their Master of all followers of Christ outside the fold of the Catholic Church pales by contrast.

To know that the real and living Christ is present in every tabernacle where the Catholic Church keeps the Blessed Sacrament—to be able every day and at almost every hour to enter into that august Presence, and speak as to a Master and Friend Who for our love submits to the obscurity and silence of the sacramental concealment of His Humanity as well as of His Divinity, is a wonderful privilege, enough to lift the heart to a state of perpetual astonishment, love and gratefulness—were not the gifts of God so vast that they surpass our appreciation.

Touching and Healing

But to the believing eye, this marvelous sacramental presence is not the only means which the loving Heart of Christ has invented to enable Him until the end of time to walk among His people, touching them and comforting them as He did of old the afflicted multitudes of Judea. The Catholic sees all about him signs of the presence and activities of the Savior of the world. At the most solemn moments of his life, he knows that the Lover of mankind is still at hand, truly though invisibly ministering to humanity no less,

but even much more than He did in His days of the flesh, nearly twenty centuries ago.

Christ's Ambassadors

There are in the Catholic Church, as everyone knows, a body of men called significantly "priests," whom the faithful address commonly as "Father." These men are set aside, not only as ministers of the word, to preach the Gospel of Christ, but also to be His agents and representatives, performing visibly the sacramental actions which He does invisibly and which are in fact not their own actions but the actions of Christ. These priests take no credit in their own person for the stupendous powers which they exercise. Their ministrations are done in the name of Him Who sends them, and Who, through His visible and enduring Church, has ordained them and sent them forth with power, in Christ's name, over the souls of men. Of themselves they are insignificant, full of human weakness like all sons of Adam. Had they been left in the ordinary ways of life few of them would have expected to rise in any way over the average run of their fellows.

Envoys and Vicegerents

Yet Catholics pay these priests a respect beyond that which is given to any other class of men in society, because they recognize in them the personal representatives of the God-Man. Under certain solemn circumstances it is no longer these

men who utter sacramental words for themselves, rather it is Christ Who speaks through their mouths, and Who touches His people by means of their consecrated hands. They are the vicegerents of Christ, His ambassadors, and they represent the person of their Sovereign. Their actions are His own, in a sense more true and effective than was ever possible to any envoy of an earthly monarch. Divine power works actually through their words and deeds. The eternal Father sees in their sacramental actions the very actions of His well-beloved Son.

The Ministry of Priests

See then these priests, other Christs in their office and mission, going quietly through the world as Christ went in the days of His mortal life, poor for the most part, consorting much with the poor, baptizing children, signing with the unction of healing those who are sick unto death, standing at a hundred thousand altars throughout the world, to call each morning the Incarnate God to dwell again in the Sacrament of spiritual nourishment for His people, offering up the eternal Sacrifice which Malachy beheld in prophecy as it is now in deed offered up from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, witnessing and blessing the marriage contract whereby a man and woman pledge each to the other their nuptial faith until death do them part, and by that sacramental action figure forth the union between

Christ and His Church. For of this sacrament of marriage, the priest is only witness. The ministers are the contracting parties, for the contract itself is the sacrament.

Christlike Savers of Souls

These obscure priests of Christ, often calumniated, persecuted and reviled, as was He also, their Master, enter the confessional day by day, spend long hours in listening to whispering voices, unknown and unrecognized, which tell each one, a tale of sorrow and give a pledge of amendment and restitution. They then lift their hands and their voices in absolution with the voice of Christ, saying to many thousands, for Him, as He said with His own lips in days of old, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee, sin no more." These priests are virgins, like Christ. They leave their homes and their kindred, as Christ left Nazareth and His Mother, to go with Him through the dusty highways of life, Like Him their whole purpose is to save men's souls. And if, at times, one out of a thousand of these Ambassadors of Christ, stoops to human weakness and soils his awful and sacred robes of office, what think you of the moral miracle which keeps Christlike through this corrupt world the other nine hundred and ninety nine?

The Plenitude of Priesthood

The bishops of the Catholic Church, successors of the Apostles and vested with their communic-

able powers, men who trace their ancestry of consecration clear from bishop to bishop of the Apostolic Church until they come to the Apostles and to the ordaining Hands of Christ Himself—these bishops possess the plenitude of the priesthood. It is they alone who can ordain priests and consecrate other bishops, and through their voice and touch Christ continues the hierarchy of His Church. It is theirs also ordinarily to confer the sacrament of Confirmation, and thus through them the Head of the Church gives to His soldiers the accolade of Christian chivalry, making them warriors who have grace to fight valiantly against the powers of evil in high places and to keep their souls unspotted, like true knights, from the contaminations of this world.

Christ with Us to the End

Such is the presence of Christ in His Church, intimate, actual, invisible but most sure. Christ washing the souls of men in Baptism and making them children of God and heirs of heaven; Christ renewing the real though unbloody repetition (not representation only but true repetition) of the Sacrifice of Calvary; Christ feeding His people with the Bread of Life; Christ blessing and binding the union of man and wife so that what God ties together no man may cut asunder; Christ anointing the dying; Christ confirming His young warriors; Christ forgiving sins; Christ ordaining new priests, deacons and sub-deacons, consecrat-

ing new bishops, so that the life of His Church and His actual presence among men may be continued to the end of the world.

These and None Others

All these, and no others than these, are the sacraments instituted by Christ and given by Him solely into the keeping of His Church. Thus and no otherwise is maintained that marvelous, constant, intimate communion with the Lover and Savior of mankind, which He has perpetuated on earth to satisfy the tenderness of His Heart for the men of every generation, and to supply the immense need of every generation for personal contact with Him to cleanse, forgive, feed and strengthen them for the conflict of life, to provide them ministers and rulers, sanctify their wedded life, and comfort them in the dread hour of their passing.

A Challenge to Investigate

The mere fact that so great an institution as the Church should make such extraordinary and immense claims as these, and should persist for so many centuries in vindicating her right to them, must strike thinking men outside her communion, and induce them to investigate thoroughly the foundation of claims so singular and imposing. None but a divine commission would ever have given men courage to teach truths so astonishing.

The Catholic Church alone can command the

faith of mankind to believe things so hard to our weak intelligence. The religions made by men are constantly temporizing and trimming to fit their beliefs to the critical and skeptical spirit of the age. The Catholic Church cannot either lessen or add to the least point of faith which she imposes on her childrens's acceptance—because all that she teaches, and this only, has been received by her directly from the mouth of Christ and guarded by her through the centuries. She insists that she and she alone can give to men the close communion with the living Christ of which we have been speaking, and she says this because Christ Himself commanded her to teach it.

The Witness of the Fathers

Through all the ages the priests and doctors of this Church have taught the faith in seven symbols, the import of which ever was, "efficacious contact with Christ." Read St. Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo in Africa who died in 430, during the fifth century after Christ, and you will find him speaking in the same way that a preacher in a Catholic pulpit speaks today about the sacraments, the marvelous outward signs of inward grace by which the Savior of men continues to touch and bless His people. For nearly twenty centuries His Church has offered to men the most intimate and sure communion with that Savior who is the way, the truth and the life to all mankind. He intends these means of com-

munion with His glorified humanity to be the priceless possession of all. But to participate in their efficacy it is necessary to be a member of that Church which alone is the custodian of His saving Faith and healing sacraments.

More about Sanctifying Grace

In connection with these outward signs of inward grace we must never lose sight of the marvelously real manner in which they make the soul more Christlike, and bring it into closer relation with Him, its Redeemer. There is infused into the soul, at the moment of Baptism, so Christ has taught His Church, a quality, the free gift of God's love, which makes the soul holy, makes it the child of God and gives it a title to the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, since, "grace" means "gift," and "sanctifying" means "making holy," this gift of God which makes us holy is called "sanctifying grace."

This heavenly quality, the wedding robe of the spirit, as the Gospels lead us to call it, may be and is increased by every meritorious action which we perform during life. So the amount of sanctifying grace which we receive at Baptism is constantly increased by each supernaturally meritorious deed. When we come to the reward of heaven our glory there and the degree of happiness we shall enjoy for all eternity is in direct proportion to the amount of sanctifying grace in our souls when we die.

A Largess from Heaven

This sanctifying grace makes us like Christ. He is the heir of God the Father by nature, we by adoption, and the more sanctifying grace we receive the more the resemblance to Him increases in our soul. Now Christ has taught His Church that in the worthy reception of the sacraments, when He, by means of His ministers, feeds, pardons, confirms, ordains, sanctifies mankind, there is given to the soul a free gift of grace by the power of the sacrament, in view of the merits of Christ. God the Father, seeing His divine Son touch that soul in the sacrament, opens the floodgates of His mercy and pours down grace unmerited by the receiver. How immense may be this largess of sacramental grace we shall never know until we come to heaven.

The Sacramental Character

Yet another marvelous contact with Christ which should not be passed over in silence, is offered us by three of the seven sacraments. It consists in what is called the "sacramental character" imprinted on the soul by the reception respectively of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. Each of these three sacraments, so the Church teaches us on the testimony of Christ Himself, confers on the receiver a spiritual quality, the sacramental character, which is added to the soul and resides in it, and by which the soul is made like unto Christ.

A Share in Christ's Priesthood

The reception of sanctifying grace makes us like Christ physically, in that by reason of this grace, we share in a wonderful way in the divine Nature and Sonship of Christ. By receiving a sacramental character we become, in a sense, morally Christ, that is to say, our being is raised to a communication with His divine office of the priesthood.

The Fathers of the Church speak of the sacramental character as a "sign by which the Angels know that we belong to the family of Christ." "Just as soldiers," says St. Thomas, "who are told off for battle, are marked with a sign of their leader by which they become, in a sense, identified with him, so those who are set aside for Christian worship, whose author is Christ, receive a character by which they are made like to Christ." [1]

The Seal of Baptism

Therefore, in Baptism, the recipient is sealed with a special spiritual character which signs him as one of the faithful who take part in the Divine worship, and to whom St. Peter addressed the solemn words, "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare His virtues, Who hath called you out of darkness into His

[1] Cfr. Pesch. Praelect. Dogmat. VI, § 193.

marvelous light:" (St. Peter, ii. 9) He becomes a member of the Church and able to share in the holy mysteries which belong to the Church. Grace may be lost but this character remains; and just as this character will be a great glory for the Blessed in heaven, so will it also be a source of greatest shame to those unhappy souls who, after receiving it, die rebels against God and are lost.

Confirmation and Holy Orders

In confirmation, again, the one who is confirmed receives another spiritual character which is a complement to that of Baptism. For the worship of God is, so to say, a spiritual warfare and those who are confirmed receive the seal of this warfare so that they may fight against the enemies of God and publicly confess the name of Christ.

Finally, the sacrament of Holy Orders, by which those who receive it are set apart and empowered for the sacred ministry, confers another character making them like to Christ in a further way. They become similar to Christ the great High Priest, they become His ministers to offer up the Sacrifice of the Altar and to give the sacraments of the New Law to His people. Thus each of these three sacraments imprints on the soul a Christlike character, corresponding to the effect of the sacrament itself. How precious a contact with Christ this offers the faithful we shall only realize in the glory of heaven. But

the more we ponder on the teaching of the Church concerning the sacramental character, the more we should be grateful to God for these spiritual and everlasting gifts.

The Answer to Earth's Cravings

We have spoken but rapidly, as need must be, of these sublime sacraments from the viewpoint of the singular and constant communion with the real and living Christ which they offer to mankind. Ah, did the world outside the Catholic fold craving for pardon and forgiveness, hungry for spiritual food, aghast at the thought of death, soiled with sin, weak and in need of confirming —did the world but know what Christ has prepared for men in the bosom of His Church, and how free and open is that Church to all the world, how many would come in at the door of the sheepfold who now wander, lost and hungering, in barren pastures, far from the kind Shepherd of their souls. Such communion with Christ is to be had through His Church alone—communion with the living Savior Who desires to be and Who is with His people as truly now as when He healed in Galilee.

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